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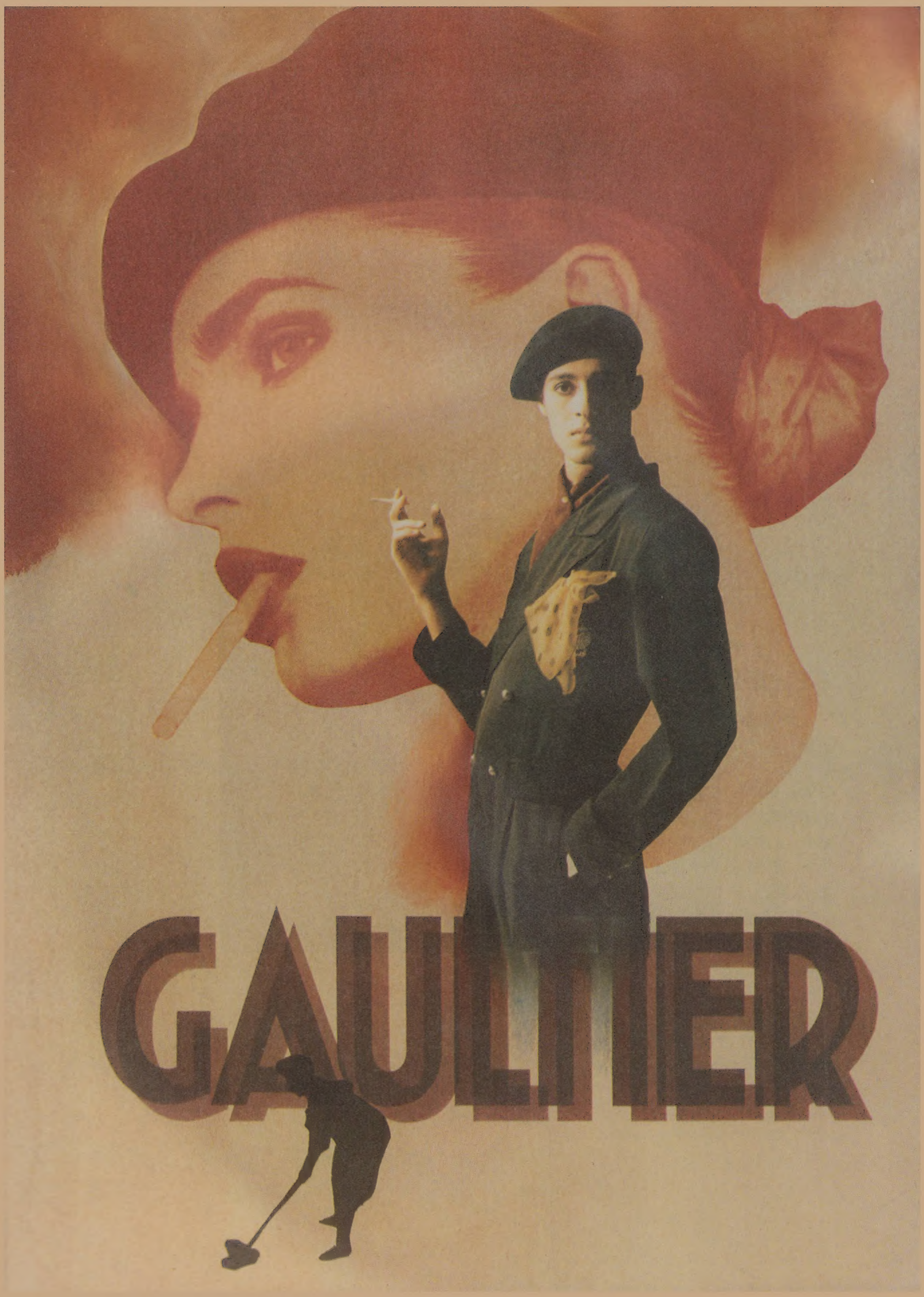
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Cover photograph: Isabella Rossellini by Robert Mapplethorpe
Photograph this page by Katsu Naito

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SPLASH (ISSN 0893-0414) is published bimonthly except July and August by Crandall Enterprises, Inc. ©1988 by Crandall Enterprises Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. The publisher and editor are not responsible for unsolicited material. All submissions and correspondence should be mailed to SPLASH, 561 Broadway 4B, New York, NY 10012. Tel: (212) 966-3218.
Subscriptions: Orders, inquiries and address changes should be sent to: SPLASH, 561 Broadway 4B, New York, NY 10012. One year subscription (USA) $20; (Canada) $30 surface, $45 air; (Foreign) $40 surface, $55 air. Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at New York and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to SPLASH, 561 Broadway 4B, New York, NY 10012.
Distribution: USA: Eastern News, 1130 Cleveland Rd., Sandusky, OH 44870. Tel. toll free: (800) 221-3148. In Ohio, (419) 627-1311. International: Boarts International, 747 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017. Tel: (212) 688-2778. Cable BOARTSINT, Telex 62276. SPLASH is printed in the United States by S. Rosenthal & Co. Typesetting by EyeType, New York. Colour separations by National Laser Separations.

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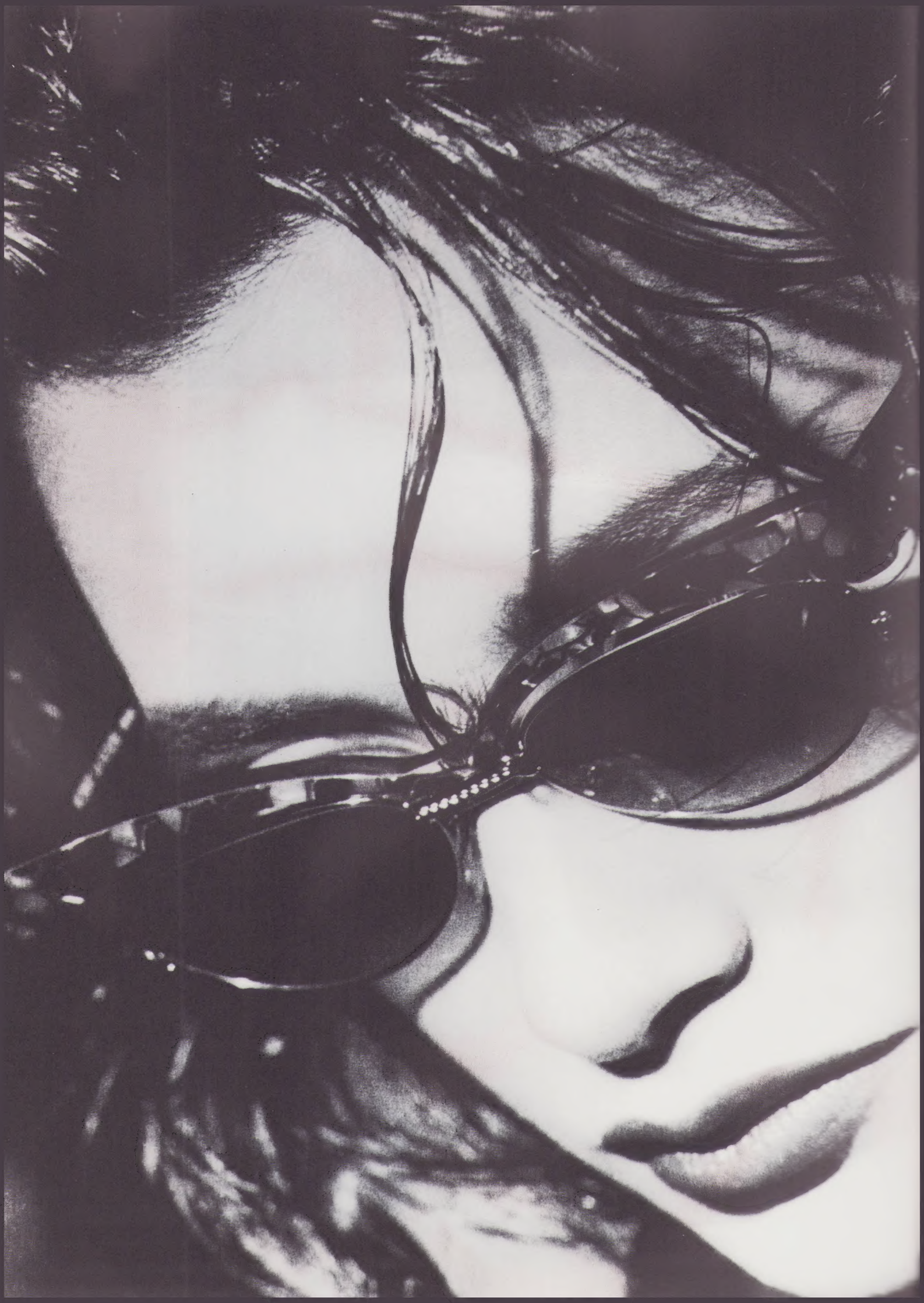

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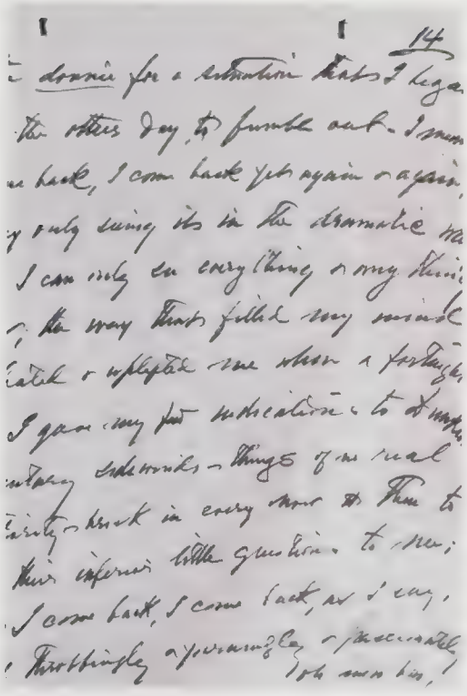

THE WORLD AS I FOUND IT

MICHAEL CANNIZZARO

. . .look seaward: what is not there
is there, isn't it, the huge
bird of the first light
arched above first waters
beyond our touching or intention
or the reasonable shore.
—Robert Hass, from "To a Reader," *Praise*

. . . imagine an historical development for our ideas different from what actually occurred. If we do this we see the problem from a completely different angle.
—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Posthumous Writings, 37e*

. . . one has to be fairly well versed in the facts before one can effectively change them.
—Bruce Duffy, from the preface to *The World As I Found It*

Young Ludwig Wittgenstein is out on a brisk afternoon flying his ten-foot dihedral over the Irish sea. He is turning his back for the moment on his decision, unpopular in the family, to leave behind his aeronautical engineering career and to head for Cambridge to study philosophy with Bertrand Russell. Thoughts float by as the kite spins off on its 150-pound piano wire leash.

Air desires . . . water encircles and engulfs . . . Ocean or air—it was either the engulfment of will or the steady pull of desire that destroyed him . . .

Why is the will so powerless to stop the thing that life has set in motion? he wondered. Did he suppose that if he were to find some value, some gloss of value might rub off on him? Desire was his crime, he saw . . . The ocean need not be deep for one to drown, nor need the grapes be high to be just past reach and hence all the sweeter. The dream is incomparably stronger than the dreamer . . .

On his lips a question was forming . . .

Where in the world is value to be found?

Bruce Duffy may have culled this scene in his novel *The World As I Found It* from careful research into potentially epiphanous afternoons in Wittgenstein's life, or he may have made it up. No matter. Method aside, Duffy's faithful construction of this imagined youth, the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, reveals the novelty of Duffy's endeavor: to take some measure of the quivering tie between the life and thought of a man who spent his life seeking that same measure. In the same early scene, Wittgenstein's mind plays Franklin's key to the summer storm, and the lines of his battle with philosophy and his life are drawn:

Straining and humming, the heavy wire curved up into the covering storm. Clouds concealed the kite. Pain congealed in his heart. He saw he'd never vault that chasm. The kite was all out, and the will was at its ecliptic—it would not be denied or cranked down. Rain splashed through his skull. His clothes filled with wind. The cable was stretching, and he could feel his clenched teeth grinding and sparking. Flashing through the lightning glints, the world shone before him like a lucid lake. For one wondrous moment, he could actually see it . . . He was already less than the air—his pleasure when the cable snapped was almost obscene . . .

Under the circumstances, it would not be an insult to Duffy's efforts to say the novel falls short of its mark by ending with its subject's final words. The phrase "history rewritten" may be an oxymoron to some and a cynical given to others, but in this instance, Duffy's line to the historical outline does not snap, and the novel is coherent and comprehensive.

"If you can see the facts as a vehicle towards something else, you can take the risk of changing them," Duffy said. "As a novelist, I did not go into this with any misgivings about changing the facts." The result is a fascinating rendition of an evolution of thought from life.

For more than seven years, Duffy put on his street clothes at the same time as his neighbors and lived a 9 to 5 Washingtonian life. The difference was his 5 to 9 life, energetically devoid of the standard nightlife of the young would-be writer working a white collar job in a city full of words and stocked with professionals to write them.

"I wasn't happy with what we were seeing in the '70s, and I had stopped writing and started painting," he said, trying to explain his tumble into Wittgenstein's life. "I had seen the house Wittgenstein built for his sister [in Vienna], and I was doing some sketches of it for a painting when the writer in me took over—here was someone who had started out as an aeronautical engineer, philosopher, then a soldier and a teacher . . ." Duffy thought he had found a man whose life could illuminate "the haunting fate of the world and this century, why things happen again and again."

The result of those years, moonlighting as an obsessed writer, was his first novel, a 500-plus page manuscript laying out in frequently unhistoric detail Wittgenstein's development into a philosopher without a language. The publication of that manuscript startled a napping publishing industry both with the acclaim and the sales reaped by the "narrow market" scholarly novel (certainly an endangered species and by some accounts, rightfully so). Are the arbiters of the best seller lists becoming brittle and dry in their old age?

As ripe for novelization as a tabloid melodrama slurped from yesterday's news, the life of Wittgenstein unfolds onto Duffy's pages in skillful defiance of the crisp economy of the philosopher's *Tractatus*. Son of a strict and practical steel magnate, brother of three young suicides, intimate observer of the legendary intellectual circles of his time, tireless and determined pursuer of a definition of philosophical certainty, and by some accounts, a latent homosexual, Wittgenstein was a walking novel waiting to be written.

The distance between words and their intended destination is mapped out in the method and the content of the novel. A Wittgensteinian acceptance of words as limited blocks in an unfinishable edifice moves the author to preface the book with a careful insistence that this is not history. At the same time, the story and style blur the distinction of fact from fiction as effortlessly as the text slips from one character's impressions to another's in reaction to the same event.

"We go through this life in a kind of a spell, and we are not aware of the forces that move us," Duffy said. Wittgenstein and Russell and their associates illustrate the struggle, which can become as violent as the world wars they lived through, to define and even control those forces. "In the mentor-student relationship Russell and Wittgenstein had, with tensions driving the relationship, it's almost fated by human nature that the student will challenge the mentor, and there's almost a kind of invisible calculus to human nature, in uncovering why the world is what it is.

"The painful way in which they keep banging their heads against the same wall, Russell trying to redeem mankind and reach the better nature in man, and in his innocence, being rather shocked and disappointed by a certain aspect in man which is unchanging—that to me is the legacy of this century."

With the range of characters including Russell, George Moore, and Lytton Strachey as well as appearances by D. H. Lawrence and many others, this structure and the scope of the endeavor put the novel in grave danger of reading like a bad biography written on hearsay. As a novel with a heartfelt connection to the history it reaches to construct, the book saves itself.

"This is not a book to me about Wittgenstein, but a book with him as a moral guide to this century," insisted Duffy. "The challenge is to take that character and explore something else."

The something else takes its form from Wittgenstein's struggles—"for lack of a better term, he thought of it as the riddle of life—his life, life in general, it was pretty much the same." In presenting the philosopher's tormenting obstacle, Duffy sends through his character a self referential nod in the direction of the irked historian in search of the presence of a past fact. In his own way, like Robert Hass, Duffy's Wittgenstein assures the reader that what is not there is there:

. . . Explain, illogician, why loss and past is form, *and* forever fixed. *Explain, please, why loss, which after all is about nothing, is still somehow* something. *And once you have explained this, then explain why—though we gulp experience whole and molt it as quickly, handling our past like a slippery snakeskin—explain, if you can, why nothing is ever forgotten or forgiven, or why a wave scarcely recedes before there comes its repetition.*

THE GIRL FROM HUNAN

THOMAS BELLER

Girl from Hunan is the first Chinese film ever to be distributed in the United States. Although China has undergone violent political upheavals in the last three decades, a film industry has grown, and with it, a film-going audience has developed. In fact, although political restrictions have severely limited directors' creative freedom, movies are extremely popular. Each year there are about twenty five billion admissions to movie theaters.

The film, based on the classic Chinese novel *Xiao Xiao*, takes place in turn of the century China in a rural village struggling to hold on to its feudal traditions. The first images of *Girl from Hunan* are of an ancient grain mill, terraced rice paddies set against a lush and imposing landscape, and the slate roofs of the village houses. The hands of man and the forces of nature have combined to forge an environment that is a sublime artifact of an ancient culture. All of these images evoke the themes of nature's cyclicality, of time passing, and of traditions outlasting human life.

The main character of *Girl from Hunan* is Xiao Xiao, a pretty twelve year old when first introduced, on her way to a village where she will be a bride in an arranged marriage. As Xiao Xiao's caravan approaches the town, the groom's pre-nuptial activities are shown, which include playing on the floor, drooling, and bawling until he is breast fed. Xiao Xiao's husband-to-be, Chun Guan, is two years old.

The movie introduces this without flinching. One is quick to witness Xiao Xiao's assimilation into the home of her in-laws as she takes up the role of wife, babysitter, and farmhand. Xiao Xiao is obedient, a shy engaging virgin. But beneath her prettiness lurks an emerging sexuality; this tension increases in anticipation of Xiao Xiao as a young woman, her husband still in baby teeth.

During Xiao Xiao's youth the film introduces the rhythms of life in the village which revolve solely around producing agriculture for trade at a nearby town. The townspeople live in deference to nature's forces, relying on the flow of water to power their technology. So, too, do they defer faithfully to the rule of the clan. Again and again the heroine is told about the harsh imperative of clan law: a certain widow may not remarry, an adultress wife must be put to death. "The law," to these villagers, is synonymous with fate. It is the hint of the possibility of freedom, beyond the rule of the clan, that gives the harsh events a new sense of tragedy. Perhaps fate need not be inexorable.

The fate of the protagonist turns, fittingly, during a natural event. A thunderstorm places her in a grain mill where she is forcefully seduced by a young farm hand named Hua Gou. Afterward, an affair blossoms and within several months, Xiao Xiao becomes pregnant. The pregnancy brings the affair sharply into focus in terms of the clan's harsh laws governing adultery. Adulterers are dealt with ruthlessly according to traditional rule. Xiao Xiao wants to run away to town to "experience freedom," but Hua Gou can't fathom this experience.

Earlier in the film, another woman in the town is introduced about Xiao Xiao's age, with a baby girl, who became a widow and, according to town rules, is never allowed to marry again. Shortly after Xiao Xiao learns she is pregnant, there is a big commotion in the village. Men and women all rush to the village center, torches flickering aginst the crepuscular sky. The event is the discovery that the widow has been committing adultery with a blacksmith from another village. The elders meet to discuss the options afforded them by tradition. Given the choice between selling her off and drowning her, they opt for the latter to set a stern example. The whole town watches as the man is given a brutal beating, including a graphic depiction of his legs being broken. The woman is carried naked on a platform, with her arms and legs bound, down to a nearby lake.

Throughout the whole event both Xiao Xiao and Hua Gou look on terrified, casting quick and furtive glances at one another. All the villagers witness the event and their expressions show emotions ranging from empathy to horror. Just before the boat sets off into the middle of the lake, with a large rock tied around the woman's neck, her daughter cries out for her. Her death is witnessed at some distance. The boat, carrying two flickering torches, pauses, a scream is heard, and then a splash. Several people cry. Yet no one dares challenge the event. It is clear that the clan's laws seem as immovable as the natural world which governs their lives. After witnessing this scene, Hua Gou escapes the village, leaving Xiao Xiao alone to face her destiny.

In time, Xiao Xiao's pregnancy becomes apparent, and she too tries to run away. With no place to go, however, she is unsuccessful, and the town is once again confronted with how to decide the fate of an adulteress. This time the solution is much more complicated. The elders, deferring to pleas on the part of Xiao Xiao's uncle, allow her to live. They try to sell her but can't because she is pregnant. They conclude that if the child is a girl, she should be drowned, and if it is a boy, he should live. She bears a son.

The plot has several surprises. The twists parallel the sense of change, stasis, and cyclicality that all of the recurring imagery suggests. In hindsight, one might be tempted to think that all this is a foregone conclusion, that the cultural system represented here has long since disappeared. But then, how is one to know what goes on in remote China? The traditions in question have proven their resilience.

An encapsulated foil to what might seem like a cultural cage is the phenomenon of the school children in town. Dressing differently, marrying by choice, they are magically immune to tradition. The freedom they represent is immeasurably remote from the life of the young bride who peeks at them incredulously during a visit. This tension is an obvious reference to the tension between tradition and modernism that has pervaded China's extremely awkward transition into the twentieth century.

The Chinese public is known to have an intense fascination with plot, and *Girl from Hunan* is rich in narrative tension. It is visually beautiful and imaginatively shot. Nature's overpowering beauty and force pervade the images. The film, shot in cinemascope, has an epic feel, though the space traveled is not measured in miles but in time. Although the film ultimately covers only about fifteen years, its action takes place in the shadow of generations.

Girl from Hunan is beautiful without being gaudy. It is a film visually stunning but not at the expense of being gripping; which in turn doesn't inhibit it from being profound. If it is any indication of the quality of the current state of Chinese cinema, twenty five billion admissions a year almost seems fathomable.

SAQQARA DOGS

KEN WEINSTEIN

The Saqqara Dogs were the dogs of the ancient Egyptian necropolis, Saqqara, about 30 miles south of Cairo, who found solace from the burning sun by digging holes in the desert sands. The New York-based music group of the same name, formed in 1985, is comprised of three musicians and a photographer: Bond Bergland, guitar and voice; Hearn Gadbois, dumbek (a Middle Eastern hand-percussion instrument), membranes and percussion; Sync66, stick (a ten-string instrument that is played with two hands by either slapping or plucking at the bottom or tapping on the fretboard), organ, cello and voice; and Ruby Ray, photography.

Says Sync66, "There's a finger touching every sound source. We're a wire- and wood-oriented band." The music has a Middle Eastern quality, mainly because of Gadbois' use of percussion from that region and the mystical, mantra-like repetition of phrases. However, Bergland's ethereal and searing guitar work offers only hints of Middle Eastern progressions. The highly textured, rumbling and surging rock bottom of Sync66's multi-faceted stick enhances the sense of mysticism, but finally just completes the transportation of this sound from the dictionaries of frustrated critics.

The Saqqara Dogs have released two records so far, an EP entitled *World Crunch* and an LP entitled *Thirst*. Most of the music is instrumental, but lyrics are added on occasion. In either case, it is an amalgam of alternately subtle and pounding rhythm beneath alternately gentle and screaming guitar-wringing. "There are a lot of scary elements and a lot of abandon in the music and the projections," Ray acknowledges. "We're trying to test people as much as we're trying to test ourselves... We're having our own inner struggle... that's what creation is."

World Crunch was issued in 1986 and features three instrumentals and one vocal composition. The instrumentals, especially the nine minute and 13 second "Greenwich Mean Time," explore the theme of chaos and control. Dreamy guitars and molten rhythms juxtapose with pounding cacophony. The guitars often simulate the whine of crashing bomber planes, and on "Across the Sky," their use of an undeviating rhythm, along side a circular guitar phrase, sounds like Bergland used tape loops in the tradition of Robert Fripp.

The songs that incorporate lyrics, such as "Sister," seem to lose the mysticism that the instrumentals have because the addition of palpable voices makes the sound less unusual and more easy to place. One is forced into thinking about an intended thought instead of allowing for a private image. "I think it's important to bring it down to earth every now and then because, otherwise, the stuff would eventually start to fly off into the stratosphere of vagueness," says Sync66. Bergland admits that the longest living and most successful material they do happens to be the instrumentals, but he also notes that while maintaining the mystical quality with vocal pieces is difficult, it is possible. "If we felt it was impossible, we wouldn't be attempting it."

Thirst, the newly released LP, finds the soundscape immensely broadened with the addition of new instruments such as organ, cow nozzle, cannisters, cymbals, water jug, mbira, lap steel guitar, tambourine, ckekere and qarqaba.

The Saqqara Dogs have an unconventional approach to song writing. In the instrumentals there are rarely any familiar hooks, and the vocal pieces do not follow the basic song structure of verse, verse, chorus, verse, bridge, etc. However, on works such as "Sister", or "Grave of Love" on *Thirst*, a structure that is obtuse and illusive does become apparent.

"It's sort of sub-conscious to keep things a little bit off-guard," comments Sync66. "Even a one-minute Chopin piece, where a theme is stated again, is always stated again [in the form] or with, at least, a slight change. We're trying to not symmetrize [the formulas], it's better to use it [only] for the most [part] and [then] [illegible]."

"Saqqara" [illegible] music is played, is viewed quite differently. Although apparently improvised, their method is actually quite calculated. Each part is memorized and set in stone, and what is heard on record is basically what is heard in performance. "I would feel very uncomfortable in a non-structured environment," Gadbois admits. Bergland says, "I think structure is really important as just something to work off of. We create many problems for ourselves and this is really what it's all about—problem solving." Within this structure, however, the pieces were written to house a certain degree of improv.

The Saqqara Dogs have no intention of adhering to established musical formulas. "Things are breaking down," Sync66 asserts. "Whether the major labels, the music business and the public know it or not... I hope we have eight strong hands on the sledge hammer. I hope we can do everything we can to twist the formulas around." One of their methods of maintaining creative individuality, away from the mainstream, is a voluntary abstinence from music market familiarity. They may hear names or anonymous sounds that they recoguize, but they restrict themselves by means of a modern music chastity belt. Their musical influences are off the beaten path, to say the least.

"Good music to me is music that sounds honest somehow... very often it is music from a religion that I don't know anything about, and it has that honesty because it's not being made for secular reasons," says Sync66. His current favorite record is by a Sufi singer from Pakistan, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, which means, "the emperor to the passageway of possibilities and success."

In addition to Middle Eastern music, percussionist Gadbois also listens to a great deal of American rhythm and blues. "I love to listen to music that I hear in a bodega. Sometimes you'll walk into a Dominican bodega and there will be some really killer weird stuff going on, like accordion and drum merengue."

Bergland hasn't really listened to much music other than his own, as of late, but Jimi Hendrix had a huge effect on his early guitar playing. "Even though Hendrix is, as far as I'm concerned, the greatest musician in rock music, I would never pretend to quote anything he did because he's been so overquoted... I just go for the feel and the extremities."

A couple of years ago, Bergland was in a terrible rut. He tried to figure out why he was spending all his time with music, but he couldn't remember. Then he found Bulgarian vocal music. "I think the guitar got into a very bad state because players were listening to nothing but other guitarists and they just developed this dialect of a language which, to me, was very small, very unimportant and plastic. It had nothing to do with anything that I wanted to suggest in the slightest."

Bergland claims that he tries to obtain the expression of vocalists. "To transfer the expression of the organs to an instrument is really incredible and that's the goal... to have it come out in the kind of choirs and with the intensity that someone can sing with."

The way music is used today, as in commercials or elevators and doctor's offices in order to subdue the masses, frightens Bergland. "Music now is not only a universal language, but it is a tool and weapon at the same time. To keep the kind of perspective on it, and to maintain the understanding that it's a vital function, is important for me. That's why I try not to hear a lot of music anymore... It just interferes with what I feel I'm trying to do."

One would think that if Bergland wants to stay away from distractions, his choice to live in Manhattan is paradoxical. "I've been really influenced by just the urban environment for years. In my previous band, 'Factrix,' based in San Francisco, the city was the main inspiration. We would try, for example, to get the sound of a bus running over somebody's body... try to get the screech of the breaks." Even though The Saqqara Dogs practice in a sound proof room, their ground floor loft is privy to every wonderful urban noise. Being a heavy rhythm band, the Saqqara Dogs use the city as a haven for ideas. It can be so overwhelming, the band agrees, that it really is a matter of being forced into a ubiquitous state of polyrhythm.

"I think somebody writing in a rural environment all their life will be less likely to juxtapose rhythms that aren't hinged to each other somehow or are fighting against each other," says Sync66.

Photographer Ruby Ray feels that New York causes a struggle-to-survive situation "so that it makes you look more deeply at what you're thinking about and makes it all the more serious." The cover of the EP, *World Crunch* is one of Ray's photographs from Egypt. It is of a pair of colossal feet from one of the many huge, ancient statues, and it looks as if they just came down from the sky and stamped everything beneath into one great mass—much like the foot that descends from the top of the television screen at the beginning of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

Ray is an integral part of the band. Although her photographs design the album covers for both *World Crunch* and *Thirst*, it is in the live performance that the images become essential. As the band plays, she projects the slides onto a screen behind them. In fact, the projector's bulb is the main light source, so the images can be seen on the band's bodies and clothes as well as on the screen.

There are specific images that are geared towards each song, according to Ray. What she will do, however, is overlay one image with another or fade out gradually on one while fading up gradually on another. It is as if the images are breathing into one another, giving each other life. The landscapes become dreamscapes as the music twists and engulfs. The silhouettes of the band can be seen on the screen as if they are characters within the story of the images—ghosts or mirages.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of The Saqqara Dogs is the obvious collective effort that goes into every aspect of their sound and vision. No one band member shines above the others, but, rather, each relates to the other symbiotically. Each player is both the shark and the pilot fish. "We're really concerned with how our parts effect our partners' parts," Gadbois states. Sync66 agrees, "I really believe in the idea of the band being superior to the solo effort." During rehearsals, Ray might give some feedback on the music while the others might help hone her visual ideas. "I look at it as more of a workshop than as a band," Bergland explains. He asserts that the only way that their music could work is as three real long solos. Sync66 calls it three one-man bands.

Bergland defines the repetitive, meditative quality of their sound as being about parallel universes and infinite possibilities as opposed to the one, never coming back the same way twice. However, when considering the effect of each person on the final objective, there is nothing parallel about them. Instead, The Saqqara Dogs seem to be more like four geometric rays in reverse—commencing from different points and meeting at a common vertex, music.

JACQUES BREL

MICHELE HERMAN

Outside of Brussels' government buildings, at starting or quitting time, a half-an-hour daily procession of beige will pass by—the civil servants in their raincoats are trudging to the office or back home, with their eyes on their sensible shoes. Though Paris is only a few hours away by train, not a chic outfit or a sexual gait disturbs the scene. No one raises a voice in animated conversation; few smile.

Singer-songwriter Jacques Brel, who died a decade ago, and whose death is being extravagantly commemorated in Europe this year, was born into this *vie en beige*. He was destined to spend his life working in his father's cardboard-box factory, an apt symbol for the things that riled the young Brel about his country and his century. Instead, as many Americans know, he escaped to Paris. There he feverishly composed and performed his way to international stature in the 1960s. Many of his songs, including "*Marieke*," "*Amsterdam*," "*Ne Me Quitte Pas*," ("If You Go Away"), "*Quand On N'A Que L'Amour*" ("If We Only Have Love") and "*Chanson des Vieux Amants*" ("Song of Old Lovers"), became standards worldwide.

Because Brel's songs fall between the cracks of American folk, musical theater and rock traditions, Americans often have trouble approaching his music. The language barrier, too, creates problems. A biting song of his called "*Le Moribond*", in which a dying man bids farewell to the men who may or may not take good care of his wife when he's gone, somehow got into the hands of poet Rod McKuen. He transformed it into the insipid "Seasons in the Sun," a pop hit in 1974.

But in Europe, Brel is a legend. Smart and independent enough to treasure his integrity above fame, he abruptly quit performing in 1967. He then wrote and starred in the French adaptation of *Man of La Mancha* and embarked on a short-lived film acting and directing career. In 1974, he disappeared, amid much speculation, to the Marquesa Islands in search of the frontier, "*le far West*," that he'd dreamed of as a child. Four years later, at the age of 49, he died of lung cancer. He is buried on the island of Hiva Oa, a few yards away from the French painter Gauguin. France's largest newspaper announced his death in the typeface usually reserved for the obituaries of popes. Brel, always wary of pretension and adulation, disdained the title of poet, but he is posthumously considered one. His songs are even studied in French schools for the economy of their composition and the beauty of their lyrics.

Although unrelated to 1960s rock music, Brel's chansons often paralleled its ideas. He decried hypocrisy with the acidity of Bob Dylan, but celebrated love with the sweetness of Lennon and McCartney. The 1968 cabaret show, *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*, with excellent translations of some of Brel's songs by Eric Blau and Mort Schuman, capitalized on these sentiments. Ironically, the translations, rooted in the 1960s themselves, have dated far more than the originals. While Brel's songs, for all their regionalism, remain universal, the revue has a distinctly 1960s flavor, a kind of stop-the-world-I-want-to-get-off mood that does not come from Brel.

Belgian director André Ernotte (*Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill, My Gene*) has tried to avoid this pitfall in his new play, *Jacques Brel Blues*, which he hopes to produce in New York later this year. The show will introduce an additional twenty-one songs to Americans, translated by the lyricist/poet Micki Grant. Instead of another revue, Ernotte and his partner Elliot Tiber have incorporated the music into a story about three people who open a New York shelter for the homeless.

"People confuse Brel with that beret-and-French-bread-under-the-arm view of France," says Ernotte, who knew Brel and remains in touch with his widow and their three daughters. "But Brel wasn't like that at all. He had more of the quality of Flemish painting. He was a tough, ballsy but tender, beer-drinking Belgian. His songs were expressionistic, and uncharming. They even had something of the gruesomeness of Bosch."

Like Agatha Christie's fictional Hercule Poirot, the fussy detective who constantly reminds clients that he's Belgian and not French, Brel was as obsessed with his roots as he was with fleeing them. This conflict created some of the enormous tension in his songs. Sometimes he sang poignantly of *le plat pays*, the rugged, windy low country of his native Flanders. Brel himself was half Flemish and half Walloon (French-speaking Belgian). In "*La Biere*" he wrote a waltz that sings the praises of the taste of northern Europe's beer; in "*Marieke*" to capture even better the flavor of his homeland, he alternated French and Flemish verses. Despite the obscurity and the hard edges of the Flemish, the song is a powerful, mournful anthem. And despite the three languages of the English version, Liza Minelli incorporates it into her nightclub act.

The Depression- and War-era Belgium was far removed from its lineage, though. Brel was always trying to drown out that mindless, deadening rhythm of the *petite bourgeoisie*, the sound of sensible shoes on pavement. Though he was no mere satirist, Brel never tired of making fun of the middle class. In "*Les Bourgeois*" he sang of three self-satisfied young men (one named JoJo—his best friend) who sit in a bar and taunt the middle-aged businessmen. "*Les Bourgeois*," they sing, "are just like pigs, the older they get, the dumber they get." In the course of the song, the young men inevitably grow into middle-aged businessmen, who are scandalized when three kids razz them with the same song.

Occasionally Brel joked at his own expense as well. "I lost my Brussels accent," sings a young rube in a heavy Brussels accent in "*Les Bonbons 67*." "Besides, no one talks that way anymore, except Brel on TV." In a song about a man who feels trapped by a demanding woman, he sings, "I was much happier before, when I was a horse." (Brel had classic Gallic features, and terribly horsey buck teeth.)

As Brel was well aware, satire has its limits. In mimicking the cycles of social groups, these songs get trapped in their own vicious cycles. And in satire there is no room for compassion or tenderness—emotions that so overwhelmed him that he had to channel them into the huge crescendos that end many of his songs. "There's not an easy song in Brel," says Elly Stone, the singer who starred in the original *Jacques Brel Is Alive...* and who recently directed a 20th-anniversary revival of it in Chicago and New York. "They all deal with the human condition, and require 200 percent concentration. You have to build the drama from the start; you can't just belt them out."

Brel's best songs are about people rather than groups, about hope, longings, failures and mortality. In his little, self-contained absurdist dramas, everyone is an unwitting victim of a force too big to grasp; they're all waiting for some Godot or another. For all his intolerance, Brel never ridiculed these people. In "*Jef*," an old drunk tries to console his maudlin buddy, who's making a spectacle of himself on the street. "Come Jef," he sings. "We'll find a bench and talk about America... I'll tell you how you'll be Rockefeller." In "*Madeleine*", one of Brel's poor fools waits endlessly for a date in front of the cinema, wilting lilacs in his hand. "We'll take the tram 33 and get some French fries at Eugène's—Madeleine will love that so... I'll tell her that I love her so."

In style, the songs range from traditional accordion-flavored French music (although in several songs characters sing about how wretched an instrument it is), to movie theme songs to vaudeville ditties to songs with a jazz or Latin flavor, and even some rhythms Brel had to invent to contain his words, like the tour de force "*Valse à Mille Temps*" ("Waltz in 1,000 Time"). By focusing on particulars, he also protested war and piety. In "*Les Toros*," by imagining what goes on in the minds of bulls at a bullfight, he shows us the stupidity of the crowd, which mistakes bloodshed for romance. A dead war hero in "*La Statue*" is ashamed of the prayer-inscribed statue erected to commemorate him, and shoos away the kids who gawk at it. "Me, who never prayed to God until I had a toothache," he says. "Me who went off to war because I was so bored."

As Brel said, with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders, "A song is a little thing, more or less clever, more or less adroit, more or less failed, with a little music." But, he added, "It's with little things that one ends up making something less little."

CHRYSSA

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ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

Bart Everly

For Robert Mapplethorpe, the encounter is as important as the photograph. "First hand experience," he says, "is more important than the photographic one." In our culture, however, experience is transformed into image; we satisfy ourselves through the image and mistrust the empirical. The result of our vast image-repertoire is that the photograph is not the reproduction, the subject is.

In his works of great beauty and strength, we see formalized the glamour of Mapplethorpe's perception of pure identity (Godard: "Not a just image, just an image.") One can feel the effect but not localize it; the work is concrete yet illusory. "It's not photography," says Robert Mapplethorpe. "It's something more than that." Exalting the medium, Mapplethore takes his work beyond the classical realm. It exists in a place where the epic encounters the lyric.

—JC

BART EVERLY: You started in Polaroids and they were in color. Why the transition to black and white?

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE: Well, I did black and white and color Polaroids when I started. I really didn't like color prints very much. I kept having to go to the labs and deal with that. I just didn't want to deal with color because I couldn't control it the way I wanted to and I couldn't afford it. What I do now is very expensive, and until this point I couldn't afford to be that extravagant. And now I really enjoy color work.

BE: You still prefer black and white.

RM: No, I try to get pictures that work both in black and white and in color. But I don't think that you can just put good color film in your camera and expect to get good color pictures. I don't think either one is less. But every time I shoot now, I take out the color film and put in a few rolls of black and white. It usually works unless you have colors that are too close in tone, where the greys grey out. Basically, I think in order to take a good color picture you set out to take a good black and white one.

BE: What influenced your aesthetic?

RM: Well, I guess, everything. From the first Polaroid to the work I do now, there's not that much difference. I just think it's the way I've always seen it. I've refined it over the years. But basically it's just the way I see it.

BE: How do you feel when critics cite certain photographers as having had an influence on you?

RM: Well, I guess I was influenced by having seen that stuff, but I really don't approach photography that way. I think a lot of photographers, by the time they are actually taking pictures, have seen so many pictures they can't come up with their own distinct style. When I started out I didn't know anything about photography, only the history of painting. But I've always felt it was an advantage not knowing much when you are starting out because you create your own vision.

BE: It seems you are continually experimenting with repetition.

RM: I guess I may exploit something until it's used up — the circle or whatever. But usually it's just the way I see it, maybe subconsciously or something. I don't set out to repeat myself.

BE: Is there a reason for delicacy rather than hardness as far as your technique is concerned?

RM: I guess I come up with the same answer. It's the way I see it or the way I want to see it. I'll do something to make the skin look a little nicer; a little diffusion or something. I'm not looking for the imperfections.

BE: Do you feel that you need to make a person look good or are you more interested in taking a good picture?

RM: I want people to look good. It's not against the way I feel. That's one of the criteria I use for taking a picture. I want people to look their best, because that's the way I want to look.

BE: If you came across two pictures on a contact, and one had a better form and shape and on the other the face looked better, which one would you choose?

RM: I'd probably print both and decide later. It depends on if they're paying for their portrait. I'm not that much of a fanatic about it.

BE: Most of your photography is done in the studio. Is there a reason for that?

RM: Sometimes I think it's out of laziness. I used to go out a lot more. It's a much bigger effort to go into peoples' houses. It's easier in the studio, and I have complete control. I can't do that outside.

BE: Why don't you prop your photographs?

RM: It's expensive to do. I build sets for commercial photographs and then use them for my own photographs. But it's expensive. I really don't feel like I need more props.

BE: Most people think of you as an artist rather than a photographer.

RM: Some people do and some people don't, I suppose. I don't care particularly anymore. I think I'm involved with art ideas in a very abstract sort of way, perhaps not in a very clear way. Most photographers are involved in photography ideas. Those people don't consider the possibilities of photography beyond the photographic image.

BE: What do you mean when you say "anymore"?

RM: I started in painting and sculpture, then after school I was pegged as a photographer. I never really saw myself that way, I don't see it as a classification.

BE: Why did you choose photography?

RM: Because it was the perfect way out for me in the seventies, it allowed me to experience a lot. And I didn't have to lock myself up in a studio, and work on the same idea. It was a lot quicker and very immediate. I could go all over town and be very productive.

BE: Did you use it to meet people?

RM: No, never. Maybe in a more abstract way that happens, but I never thought, "Gee, what would it be like to be a photographer. Just think of all the possibilities!" I know a lot of photographers do it that way. If one went through the list of celebrities that I've photographed, there are a lot of people missing that one might have thought that I would have shot, but I never made the effort. I never set out to photograph someone to get to them. I don't understand, it's like a voyeuristic approach to life. People end up having sort of an interesting life because they've seen something or think they have. Because they have been out with this one or that one or rubbed elbows or whatever. I'd rather spend an evening talking to someone that was interesting and never taking their picture. I'm not obsessed with that, basically life is more interesting without a camera. I take pictures and it adds to my life. If I had a choice of photographing the party or going to the party, I'd certainly go to the party.

BE: How did you get your first show?

RM: My first show was at Gotham Book Mart. There was a little gallery upstairs. It was a group show with Polaroids. I was living with Patti Smith and she was publishing her first book of poetry and that is how I met Andreas Brown and he was running that gallery and they put me in the show. I don't really think it matters at first where you show your work. People get hung up on that and end up never getting their work out there.

BE: Do you believe things such as advertising are a compromise?

RM: No, it's a challenge.

BE: You stated before that you are more of a photographic image person rather than a photographer. Is there a conflict?

RM: It's a challenge to be a photographer. Even though I might not put those photographs in an exhibition, some in fact do go in exhibitions. They sort of transcend the problem that was solved. I don't see them as anything less. It's another set of problems and it's complicated and difficult sometimes to solve, and you have to please a lot of people, but that's all part of it. I've learned a lot taking pictures for other people. I've been able to use those same things in my own work. The same kind of lighting. Or maybe I had to do close ups so I bought a new lens that I might not have had. A lot of so-called art photographers say "I'll never do commercial photography" and it's sort of a cop-out. They just can't deal with all the problems that are involved, a lot of people and a lot of egos. They can't cope with that so they use it as an excuse and say that it will ruin their art. It's just insecurity on their part.

BE: Was there ever a time when your photography was just carrying out an art director's vision?

RM: Most of the time, when I do commercial work, they've chosen me because they know the work and want what I do. Certainly in editorial they leave me alone or I wouldn't do it, because there isn't enough money involved to put up with the hassle.

BE: Do you like taking still lifes more than people?

RM: No.

BE: Do you approach them differently?

RM: Well, you have to speak to the people.

BE: Do you prefer natural light?

RM: If I have daylight, I use it.

Previous page: ***Calla Lily*, 1988.** Left: ***Orchid*, 1987.** Following pages: ***Orchid*, 1986. *Lydia*, 1985.**

BE: Do you see yourself moving into other artistic endeavors outside photography?

RM: With this coffee table here I was working with a particular carpenter. I had a whole series of things I wanted to do, but unfortunately he sort of freaked-out after completing this table. It's unfortunate, because I'm still doing sketches of these pieces of furniture, not detailed drawings, so I need someone who understands what I'm talking about. The whole idea has fallen apart since I've lost this guy. Someday I hope to do all my own furniture, but it's an extravagance, so I need someone who understands where I'm coming from.

BE: Do you ever consider doing something in film again?

RM: I don't know, there's too many people involved. I'm not the sort of person who really likes to plan things out and work six months on a project. I like immediacy, and film is not about that. It's not satisfying, with all the preparation it involves.

BE: Do you like working with other people?

RM: You have to work with other people, you just pick the right people. You have to have a crew of people that you really trust or who think the way you do and interpret things in the same way.

BE: When you make your prints, do you discuss things such as tonal relationships thoroughly with your printer?

RM: By now he knows pretty much how to print things, but sometimes I have to have him change minor things. Sometimes he's not in the mood but he knows what kind of print I'm after.

BE: You once said that you wouldn't take a picture of yourself depressed, because you didn't want to see that side of yourself. What kind of pictures do you take when you are depressed?

RM: I'm not depressed when I'm taking pictures.

BE: When you are *depressed, would you take a picture for relaxation, or to take your mind off what's depressing you?*

RM: That's all too complicated and it's too simple for that. Maybe at one time I would do that. But I don't work by myself anymore, because of the perfection I'm after. It's more complicated now. It's not so easy for me to just take pictures.

BE: Do you conceptualize your photographs at all?

RM: No. I really don't know what I'm doing until I do it.

BE: When people talk about your work, in the future, what would you like them to say?

RM: I guess I care, but I really don't think about it. I guess I've read enough reviews, and I like some of them and I don't like others. I'd just like the people to like the pictures.

BE: Did you, when you started out, want to shock people with your radical subject matter? In particular, your S & M photographs.

RM: I wanted people to see that even those extremes could be made into art. Take those pornographic images and make them somehow *transcend* the image. And I think the best of those pictures do that, again because of the composition. I think that's an accomplishment, it's a problem that I'd set out to solve. I was trying to prove a point about sexuality. I was enthusiastic about people experimenting with themselves. I was trying to get them to understand something, not intimidate them.

BE: How about your photographs of black men?

RM: I photographed black men early on, by chance. I wasn't obsessive about doing a study or anything. At some point I realized that the pictures I did of black men were really good. For any number of reasons I thought they were good, and I thought, that's a whole area that hasn't been explored before. So I took pictures of black men as a regular thing.

BE: Was the skin color the specific reason that you photographed black men?

RM: I don't know. The form really reads nice on the black, it's like a bronze. But recently I did a white man's body parts and it reads just as nice. Personally, I just gravitated towards black men.

BE: Do you work mostly in series?

RM: It's not planned, it just sort of happens. I shoot flowers continuously so I guess it's sort of a series. It gives me a little more incentive to do something.

BE: Is there anything in photography that you would like to accomplish yet?

RM: I think there are still a lot of things to explore, though there is nothing that I'm obsessed with.

BE: Do you want to experiment more with color?

RM: Yes, that and framing. I'm still really interested in the presentation of photography. To experiment with the way it sits on the wall.

BE: What are your upcoming shows?

RM: I'm having shows everywhere, two retrospective shows and one in portraiture. One at the National Portrait Gallery in London, one in Amsterdam, one at the Whitney in July and the I.C.A. in December, in Philadelphia. The Whitney will be a retrospective and luckily I've held back a few pieces of everything through the years. It will be a show of everything I've done, the frames etc., not just photographs.

BE: You talked once about Penn and Avedon separating their work from their art. Do you feel that this is never true with you?

RM: I think Penn and Avedon thought they had to separate their work from their art. I don't think that's a healthy approach. I think you should do what you do whether there is a product to sell or not. I find that these people go from one extreme to another. Penn thought he had to smash cigarette butts and beer cans and take those grungy, dirty street pictures. He thought that that was one way to make art. He does such beautiful still lifes, he could have just done them without a product in them and I'm sure they would have been beautiful. I think Avedon did the same when he went to the Diane Arbus school of photography to make his art, when in fact his best pictures are his incredible fashion pictures, the one with the elephants, etc. The picture of the elephants is so together and elegant, I think that's his art.

BE: What do you think about Diane Arbus?

RM: I think she certainly had a vision. I certainly wouldn't want to have that vision. But I have a lot of respect for somebody with that kind of vision. It's depressing and it captures that depressing side of life. I would rather capture something else.

BE: Do you think Avedon's West Series was a freak show for him?

RM: It ends up being that. I don't think he enjoyed sitting around and talking to those people in those pictures. They are pictures of white trash, and Avedon's just the opposite.

BE: Do you want to take pictures of people and things that interest you rather than, like Avedon, taking pictures of people that don't interest you personally?

RM: I really don't know him and I hate to make assumptions, but he seems quite removed from those people.

BE: So you personally want to have a relationship with those people?

RM: Not with *those* people! But yes, with my subjects I do. I'd like to think ideally I could hang out with the person and ideally maybe have a better experience than photographing them. If there was somebody that I really did want to meet, I think I'd rather spend a night eating dinner with them than taking their picture.

BE: Who would you really like to meet?

RM: I don't think there is anybody in particular. I really couldn't come up with somebody because I don't really have heroes.

BE: In what way do you separate your work from your life?

RM: It all gets integrated into one thing. I really don't separate it. I hate it when somebody comes up to you in a club or something and wants you to take their picture and they say they'll pay for it and you know they can't afford it. I don't want to think about that, I used to be a lot more open to taking people's pictures but now I'm more selective, I guess.

BE: Would you be angry if you hadn't reached the success that you have had?

RM: Well, I probably would have no one to blame but myself so I would be angry, yes. And take it out on other people, I guess that's what people end up doing. Anybody who is not successful financially couldn't play the game, if they're talented.

BE: Do you feel that you've played the game?

RM: I've enjoyed playing it pretty much, but I've never really thought of it as a game. Everything's a game, I guess, but I wasn't consciously making moves. I started out without a dime and worked real hard. I did whatever I had to do at certain moments to get by, because I really believed what I was saying was worthwhile saying. I figured that people would eventually pay me to say it. I remember in art school when I used to draw and think, if I could just get people to pay me to do this I'd be happy the rest of my life.

BE: If people didn't want to pay you for your work, would you feel successful in your own mind?

RM: I don't think that it would be satisfying to work in a vacuum. You want to be appreciated. Even though you're convinced you're a genius, it's somehow not satisfying. I think it's important to have an audience.

Previous pages: ***Calla Lily*, 1987**; ***Dennis*, 1983.** Left: ***Orchid*, 1987.**

photography
albert sanchez

styling and
coordination
lauren landau
celestine cloutier

hair + makeup
agostina
celestine cloutier

backdrops
peter sparrow

models
michael hermance
omars men

paula thomas
prima models

jennifer - it a
model management

clothing
gaultier 1
tokio kumagai
gaultier 2
gaultier 3
comme des garcons 4
yohji yamamoto 5
gaultier 6
yohji yamamoto 7
gaultier 8

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI

Jordan Crandall

JORDAN CRANDALL: Let's talk about your new film, Zelly and Me.

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI: I thought *Zelly and Me* was the most feminine script I had read, when I was contacted by Tina Rathborne [who wrote and directed the film] last January, a year ago. I liked the fact that she was very delicate, very precise. Tina is more for an idea rather than how to do the idea. You know, some directors, or some films, are planned on something that is quite shocking, that blasts your mind. They go for that, they make the story, but it starts out the character action before the character. Tina is the other way around. She focuses completely on feelings. The film is very delicate; it looks like it was whispered. It tells the story of how a little soul can be tormented and broken. It's a story of child abuse, but it's very subtle. There is no beating or screaming. The girl Phoebe [Alexandra Johnes], is rich, she has millions of toys, she has a dog, she has a maid, she has a cook; everything goes against the idea of child abuse. In spite of all that, she still gets very hurt in her soul. They corrupt her soul so much, the child starts punishing herself. I'm fascinated by that process. There is a certain point where you become your own punisher. And this film tells that story, through the mind of a child who has lost her parents and comes to live with her grandmother, who is quite severe. So the grandmother [Glynis Johns] finds herself at an older age, when she can finally die in peace, with this little child with no men around. And she is caught in this tremendous anxiety of wanting the child to grow up fast. She becomes very hard, thinking that this would strengthen her. It's not that the grandmother is a sick character—that is a whole philosophy about bringing up children. It's very popular in Europe. It's very popular two generations ago that punishment strengthens you, to make you better fitted for a tough life. My character, Zelly, the child's governess, comes in instead and she's very warm and very understanding. What Zelly does is miraculous and saves the little soul of this child.

JC: What does Zelly bring into the life of this child?

IR: The courage to just feel your pain instead of deny it.

JC: There is a conflict about the two different ways of educating a child.

IR: And one maybe belongs to a generation before and Zelly is more modern. But it's also an everyday conflict. You do have, anyway, that conflict within yourself, it's not just a generation thing. How to be firm, and yet allow enough to grow. And how to lead somebody. It's very personal to me, since I have a child.

JC: You have to allow yourself to grow but discipline the way you handle it. But how much you should discipline a child is uncertain.

IR: It can have the opposite effect! I remember as a child, sometimes there has been some punishment, right or wrong, and I remember the punishment but I don't remember why I was punished. So that punishment was not effective. But that punishment scared me so much that it was the effect of the punishment that influenced my life.

Isabella Rossellini photographed by Robert Mapplethorpe.

JC: Often it's not the thing that influences, but the effects of the thing.

IR: I think all of us, growing up as children, had a very traumatic experience of discipline. That is very painful somewhat. Maybe since you were a baby, and so much more vulnerable to it. But when you're young you have so little to express it or to be assertive yourself. That's also what Zelly teaches the child, to be assertive. To allow yourself to feel whatever is there to feel. And the child does, in the end, learn that lesson. She is more capable of dealing with the grandmother, just because she understands.

JC: Why is Joan of Arc such a strong motif in the film?

IR: You know, in Catholic countries, each day is dedicated to a saint. Zelly is short for Mademoiselle, what Phoebe calls me, but my real name is Joan. So my saint, being Catholic, is Joan of Arc. And Zelly talks to Phoebe about Joan of Arc. She would like to give her the consolation of religion in a moment of death, and I think she thinks that Joan is a good choice, because she's a heroic young woman and the saint of children. And Phoebe has to be this heroic young kid who has been so badly hit by life. Phoebe is very shocked by the fact that Joan of Arc dies burning. She's very fascinated by the story. But what is puzzling to her . . . What torments little Phoebe, is that Joan of Arc dies burned rather than say that she hasn't heard the voices of God. You know, in the trial, she doesn't have to die if she would just say that she hasn't heard the voices. But that became very puzzling for the child, because the child has been forced sometimes in the punishment of the grandmother to say something she doesn't believe. So she betrays herself, she betrays her inner voice. She is not like Joan of Arc, she feels, but should be like Joan of Arc. She has the same problem, how do I assert myself and not hurt my toys? Her toys are her babies, she's very maternal with them. The grandmother gives her a teddy bear, then the child starts punishing the teddy bear as the grandmother punishes her. As Zelly, I don't understand what's happening. I just see this teddy bear being knocked around and drowned and all that. And at one point I see the teddy bear floating in the sink and I do sense that something is disturbing. I sense that there is something alarming that I have to monitor. Zelly feels that the child is trying to say something but can't verbalize it. She has a terrible thing in her little soul. So in the last phases of the film, she trys to burn herself, to see if she would be able to hold the pain that would come if she asserts herself. The burning, that's what I like about the film. The child does not burn herself so much that I find her like a little match. She just burns herself a little bit. The whole thing is quite delicate. So the appearance of the film is as delicate, as wealthy, as proper as Phoebe's life, but the appearance hides an incredible violence. And the film captures that.

JC: It's similar to Blue Velvet, *the things that go on beneath the surface. Underneath there is turmoil. And Phoebe sounds oddly similar to Dorothy Vallens.*

IR: There is a comparison that can be made between the two characters. Dorothy, as Phoebe, is somebody who was completely overwhelmed by pain, inability to deal with anything and inability to express herself, assert herself, be herself. So she becomes available to anything, just to be nice. Because she can't assert herself. She doesn't know. She killed herself. Dorothy killed her soul, you know. She's a moving . . . body. Her soul is gone. Her mind is gone.

JC: She's basic emotion.

IR: Yes, and she's completely at the mercy of Frank. And I think that Dorothy, she self-punishes herself by allowing Frank to rape her. But she creates her own Mass, you know. It's like a Black Mass that takes place. It's not that Frank comes in and rapes her. Frank comes in and says, the candle isn't lit. And where is my whiskey. You have the suggestion that it's a ritual. That every night that takes place. That every night she has to put that little baby chair in front of him, and spread her legs, he has to have a glass of whiskey, the candle has to be lit. And she is herself her own murderer, with Frank. But it isn't a true rape, in the sense that a man comes in with a knife and points it at her. This was able to eliminate her mind and eliminate her soul. She does this terrible ritual. I think that Dorothy, when he hits her, she reacts with a smile, she likes it. She likes the punishment, in the sense that . . . I don't know how to explain. It's the same way, like Phoebe—in the end she starts to punish herself. There is something that you . . . there is a sickening catharsis. There is a sickening feeling that finally you've punished yourself. That maybe if you punish yourself something else won't happen.

JC: You can take it on yourself, so it won't happen to someone else.

IR: I think it's her sick way of thinking that if she keeps Frank's madness to herself, Frank will not hurt her child and her husband, who have been kidnapped. In fact, when Jeffrey makes love to her, she says, "You put your madness in me," because she thinks that is the only thing she can do, to be a sponge of other people's madness. And as long as they do it to her it won't harm anyone outside. I don't know what is the mechanism of it, you know. I believe it, I know it exists, but I can't explain it. Myself, I've never been literally in the same situation as Phoebe or Dorothy, but yet to me it is the most compelling wonder that I have. Because I have found myself often doing this mechanism, in a very mild way. I'm not saying I've gone through any of those experiences. It's something that does happen.

JC: It seems Tina Rathborne and David Lynch both pay attention to images of emotion, rather than word-images, as with Norman Mailer, who has also directed you.

IR: David and Tina are hard to compare, of course. David has done four or five films, and a lot of short films, and this is Tina's first one. I think Tina is extremely talented. I think she will show that when she develops. *Zelly and Me* has all the elements, but I don't think it will be so commercial and so successful. *Blue Velvet* came after David did several films, and each one was like the little baby of the one before, because you gather experience.

JC: Early on, you have to experiment and explore everything, sometimes to the extreme, and then, with discipline, it becomes focused and the ideas begin to crystallize. But you don't lose anything from before, it's still there.

IR: It's transformed, yes. During the filming of *Blue Velvet*, I rented a VCR and I did a Dennis Hopper film festival and a David Lynch film festival, and I saw all their work. It's amazing how, from the first film, you see the seed that had bloomed and made them famous. But yet, if you see their first film without the rest of the career, I mean, you see David's first films and they are so strange. I'm sure people say, how in the hell can he ever be commercial? I'm not saying *very* commercial, like a Beverly Hills Cop film, just a little bit commercial. It seems almost hostile to the viewer. And yet, you see the humour, the deepness. The seed is there from the beginning.

JC: His early films were intensely creative.

IR: And so, he is able, you know, to do what he does.

JC: The early work adds the depth; there is a sense of it but now there is a more complex structure.

IR: If he can use that incredible imagination of his with one good murder story, it has implications that are so profound. That was what appealed to me in *Blue Velvet*. It wasn't the murder story, it was the implications of the Dorothy character that were so compelling. I couldn't turn it down. The film had so many elements. *Blue Velvet* can be read so many ways. Many people could enjoy it on the first level of a murder story. That's why it allowed itself to be much more popular in a way. Some people were turned off because it was too violent, you know. Too disturbing. But that was the only group, and the rest were pretty much for it.

JC: How do you prepare for a role?

IR: What I generally do is try to find all the things about the character. I think it's in the film, in the character, but you could go and say you didn't see any of it. The scene is drinking tea. What I see, by drinking tea, is tremendous, like a duel. There are layers and layers and layers. Once these layers are added, the only thing that needs to be done is to be able to sink into that, to be able to concentrate. Once you sink into the character and you have concentration, you begin feeling it. If it's a moment of feeling painful, you feel pain. You know when you read sometimes a book? And you are completely taken? You start feeling those things exactly like the character.

JC: You have moments when you are completely taken away by the character, you're not always aware of the division?

IR: Yes, completely. Actually, you aim for those moments. Some actors stay in character all the time. I find that very hard. Some actors want to be called by the name of the character they are playing. For that time that they are working they just want to stay in character. It does help the concentration. It helps to be always there. And I understand that incredibly well. But I can't do that. I have a child at home.

JC: With a character such as Dorothy Vallens, you can't bring her home.

IR: It would be impossible. I agree. Sometimes one has to step out, or you lose perspective. But to go on the set and start a scene, I can't come off the phone fighting with my agent about something, and then jump into the scene. I must interrupt my life. I need an hour or two hours before I get to the set. You empty your mind from your worries as Isabella. And once you are a vacuum and you're all emptied and all that seems very far, then you can allow the new things to come in, and you have to keep it that way.

JC: Do you use past experiences to generate certain feelings or do you rely on the situation, the script, itself?

IR: Yes, I do. Sometimes it's misleading, I must say. For example, you go over a scene, and you say, hmmmm, this I think feels like that, what is it in my life that felt like that? And all of a sudden an episode will emerge. Then you do what is called sense memory. You allow yourself a very long time. You recreate the room where you were at, what time it was, the temperature, what you were wearing. Don't go for the feeling, oh, I felt pain, let me feel the pain. Reconstruct all the details. At the end of this process a soaring feeling will come, and you will experience it. And I have used it, this sensory memory. I can't say the whole script is built on that, because if it becomes too personal . . . I try to use the experience to express my own things, but I may use elements of my life that don't fit in a particular scene. It could be that it's approximately the same thing but the outlet of it, or the anger that came out of it maybe shouldn't be appropriate in there. Maybe the character let anger develop and maybe self-

punishment developed or something else. You have to keep your heart open and your vulnerability. So you feel hurt? Okay, you feel hurt. And once you've felt it. . . You know, it's a fear of feeling it that prevents you from feeling it. Once you are there, you're feeling it.

JC: You use the preparation to get there, but once you're in the scene, you don't think about it, you're in the scene.

IR: Yes, and you are that character.

JC: How did you develop your character in Norman Mailer's film Tough Guys Don't Dance*?*

IR: I still think that Norman's film is great. Again, it was a first film. I think he had elements in that film that could blast your mind. And it was so evil, the philosophy behind it, but he had the guts to say it—that we're all animals after all, we belong to the kingdom of the jungle. I always try to go against that. I always try to be moved by people. Even Frank Booth [in *Blue Velvet*], I tried so much to understand how much he suffered. Because if I accept, I think that I'll be accepted. Norman went so against that, and said we are animals, we have no feelings, we are not moral, immoral, ammoral. We don't have any of that. But I must say that I understood it when the film came out, but when I did the film I was resisting it. And I did not allow really Norman to direct me. Also, it was the first time Norman directed and he maybe didn't tell me enough. But I resisted it because it was so evil, it was so frightening. I backed away. And why I didn't let myself go is that I didn't have enough preparation. When I do a film, I need two months to get into the character. Maybe because I'm a beginner actress. The more I do it the faster I'll get there.

JC: Why didn't you have enough time for preparation?

IR: Because of *Blue Velvet*. David finished editing *Blue Velvet* in March of '86. And the film came out in September '86. And for the six months, it was hell. The film, by November, had established a reputation. But for about seven or eight months we had the most wild responses, and some of them very violent against us. And a lot of them against me, because, you know, I was a model, I was Ingrid Bergman's daughter, who was in *The Bells of St. Mary*. She was the original Joan of Arc.

JC: It must have been a rough time.

IR: It was hell. I thought I was going to die.

JC: Did you fear losing the contract with Lancôme?

IR: I was afraid of it. But actually, I must say, Lancôme stood by me so strongly it was amazing. I would have expected them to be upset. I explained to them what you see in the film and all of the psychological implications. Nobody likes to take off their clothes and yet I explained to them why it was absolutely necessary, what the implication of the rape meant, and all that. And they said, "we believe you." And it worked out fine. But they were brave to keep me there. In fact, the people that I thought would stand by me didn't. I had just changed an agent. The previous agent, when I accepted to do *Blue Velvet*, said "no, we're not so sure." They read the script and said "Oh, my God." So I said, well, I need somebody who will stand by me. I went with another agent, and he hated the film. He stopped talking to me. I had to change once again. The people I thought would protect me, were against me.

JC: Most people advised you not to do Blue Velvet*?*

IR: I had a lot of opposition once I did the role, but not so many people knew that I was going to do it. When the film comes out is when it can be devastating, because then everybody has an opinion.

JC: Were you allowed to see the daily rushes while you were filming?

IR: No, I wasn't. Most of the directors don't want you to. It's really an American habit.

JC: They're probably worried that you will become too conscious of the exterior of the character, and it will affect the inner life.

IR: It's a technique. In Europe, they allow you to see it. You can work it out with the director. You can see things, and say "I like this, and this, and that." But there is this illusion, I don't know. It's just a different technique. In America they believe that if you see yourself instead of going with the director, you start directing and censoring yourself. There is a stupid idea that actors are vain. Not that we are not. You are the one who is on the screen and you get a lot of the blame. So sometimes you do really become self-conscious and careful of what you do next. But if you act, and if you're a good actor, you fight that feeling of wanting to protect yourself by looking good.

JC: Americans are afraid of looking bad. I don't think Europeans are as afraid. They take more risks, and don't fall into the same narrow perception of beauty.

IR: Also, the American tradition of films is, it's entertainment, it's bigger than life, and it makes you fantasize. In the European tradition, films are the portrait of yourself, the thing that you use to understand human nature. When you have a director like David Lynch who combines the two, you have a fantastic result.

JC: Many American film critics, Rex Reed for example, have the criterion: is it entertainment? is it entertaining? Blue Velvet, *for instance, was "not entertainment," therefore, it was a bad film.*

IR: I don't know. Film is everything. We don't have that discrimination in books. In film, they are still looking for a definition. Film can be many, many things. Actually, I am a coward. It was enough for me to meet the press to try to promote *Blue Velvet* to devastate me. So I didn't even really read what they had written. I was completely shaky. What had happened was that when people understood the film, and the power of the film, they went to David Lynch, obviously, because he is the one who figured it out. He wrote it and directed it. When they did not like the film, or only saw the aspects of the film that were shocking, they wanted to talk to me. Because I was the most controversial character, because of my mother. Why would I do that, they wanted to know, why would I take my clothes off, didn't I have enough money already? And so I ended up doing the interviews that were the toughest. With *Blue Velvet* in the production stages, Dorothy was the victim. And people were afraid to go to Dennis Hopper. They were afraid he was going to be Frank Booth. So they came to me. And people talked and said things to me that . . . I mean, I was asked questions that were so . . . I think people thought that there was no more inhibition. They thought I was available to *anything*. They were very insensitive. So it was very tough when the film came out. When the film wasn't out, we were already in this process with the press. The film wasn't going to be released at the beginning, because they thought it was too tough.

JC: During this time you were asked by Norman Mailer to do Tough Guys.

IR: Norman saw the film. I was in Israel. I had accepted the fact that my career was going to be over. I thought I may even lose my green card. So I just did any small part that was available, just to be away. I couldn't take it in America. I was too afraid when it came out. And I felt I should just rush to do anything, to start a new life. I did a small part in *Siesta*. It was a teeny part, but I thought, well maybe it will be a good

Isabella Rossellini photographed by Bruce Weber. Hair: Didier Malige. Makeup: Bonnie Maller. Collection Vogue.

beginning. I did another small part, the mother of Little Red Riding Hood. Then I did a very small part in a Marcello Mastroianni film, *Dark Eyes*, but the part was so small it was cut out. Meanwhile, I saved myself. I was in Spain, Israel, Italy . . . I was gone for many months.

JC: You really felt it was all over?

IR: Yes, very severely so. And in the middle of this being away, the furthest possible from everywhere, crying on the phone with David Lynch every night, Norman Mailer called and he said, I love your film. He had seen the film in the Telluride Film Festival, and it was quite a success there. So Norman offered me the part. It was the first time I was offered a part—I had to test for everything. I just couldn't believe it. I was so afraid; I thought that my life was going to be over. My career as a model, my acting, everything.

JC: After the film was released, it began to be well received.

IR: It took a turn, I believe, because three or four critics, Pauline Kael, Sheila Benson, David Hanson, understood it and loved it. If we didn't have them, I don't know what would have happened. They stood by the film and they saved it. They gave a key to see the film. Instead of just the aspects that were so shocking, the things like what Rex Reed said. All of a sudden the whole thing changed. So, back to Norman, when he asked me to do the film, I said, Norman, you're the only one who wants me! And we only have a month, before the film is released, and that will be my end, so . . . Thank you so much, I said, you give me the possibility of rebirth. So I went directly from one film to *Tough Guys*, and I did not have enough time to rehearse. We did the film and it was so violent. The philosophy behind it was not violence, but it was cold. So I resisted it. It was the time of my life when I was very vulnerable and I needed to tell that it wasn't like that. I wished I was cold and immoral and indifferent as Norman's character, but it was a time in my life that that seemed to me the furthest possible thing. I felt everything so strongly, and I felt wounded by *Blue Velvet*. If I would have had more time to understand it, and put myself together, I might have done a better job.

JC: Are you very critical of your own work? When you do a role, and then you see it on screen, how different is your performance from the way you've pictured it?

IR: I have a hard time. I have to see my film two, three or four times to be able to really say what I have done. Each time, it is a very painful experience. For example, I saw *Blue Velvet* only once, and I think a lot . . .

JC: You saw Blue Velvet only once?

IR: Yes, only once. I don't even remember it. I was so in shock. I have the cassette, and I have to see it again. But you know when you hear a song, it's a song that you've heard in a moment in your life, and all of a sudden you don't hear the notes or the melody, but a feeling comes back. And I can't watch *Blue Velvet*, because I stopped seeing the film, and instead all these feelings that I had when I was doing it or when it came out, are so strong. I see a scene and I can just hear the comments, "Oh, she's so ugly, she's so fat . . ." So I can't watch the film, because it's like a song that could just kill you. So I need more time, more distance, and then I can go back and see it. I must say that I have a hard time seeing myself on screen. When the film is out and there it is to be judged, you feel so helpless. So I judge my work when I do it, how deep I'm concentrated, how deep I am the character. I do feel I have reached that concentration best in *Blue Velvet* and *Zelly and Me*. In Norman's film, I resisted it. I argued. See, I tried to be assertive and it was the wrong time. One of the difficulties I have personally is to speak out. To say what I feel. I sometimes have an opinion, but I'm so scared that my opinion doesn't flourish.

JC: But with your style, you pay more attention to the nuances, which can be much more telling and evocative than having to say it.

IR: Right. That's what I liked about *Zelly and Me*: it was all in nuances. Richard Avedon once told me he was working and working and working trying to make a picture with my collar standing up, and with my silk shirt it kept on falling down. He looked at me and said, sorry to take so long, but God is in details. God was in the details of *Blue Velvet*, too. It's true, that you build up the biggest feeling on the teeniest little thing. And Tina, the director of *Zelly and Me*, has that. Things talked to her, they have a way of vibrating to Tina. A good director has things that exude feeling, that exude character. Tina says it very delicately. Because if you say it very violently with a loud voice, with blood spewing out, you shut up. And I think it's true of a lot of women. That has been a wonder, I don't have a sociological answer for it. But a lot of the standards in directing have been set by men; they're very masculine. It precludes women from expressing themselves because it's scary.

JC: Does David Lynch play a sort of Prince Charming in Zelly and Me*?*

IR: David Lynch is the Prince Charming. He's the only man. As Zelly, when I see him, I go completely off in my fantasy. I think he's a millionaire, I saw him living in this big house, he offers me tea and I'm so thankful to be with him and have tea because he's a millionaire, and I'm the governess of this child, and he's so fantastic and I fall completely in love with him. Then at the end of the movie I realize he's the butler. And when I realized that, it isn't so much the pain of the love, but being disappointed at this man who I think had lied to me. Because he knows. He had never really told me that he was a millionaire, but he never really had the courage to say that he isn't. He let me believe whatever I wanted to believe. He tries to tell me, but I kept on cutting him short and saying, I know who you are, you don't have to tell me, please, I'm so thankful to be here with you. He was caught. When I finally realized, not so much that he's the butler, but that I had lied to myself, I do say to the child, I haven't listened to my voices.

JC: Many times you want someone to be something so much, you have this image of them, or you have the image of anything, and you don't want the reality of it. You don't want this image to be destroyed. And certainly no one else wants to destroy it for you. The image can be so much more powerful than the reality.

IR: This is what David's character, Willy, feels. Sometimes I have been with friends or family, and they have lost somebody, somebody died or were sick, and you allow them to lean on you more than you think you should. But for that time being, sometimes that situation doesn't give you any other alternatives. You allow yourself to be the fantasy.

JC: How did David Lynch end up in Zelly and Me*?*

IR: When Tina was casting the film, I offered myself to go and read with the actors, because it goes much easier. And it became very difficult to cast Willy. The chemistry had to be right. Obviously, we wanted a very good actor. And there aren't too many good actors that age, because either they have made it, so they are stars and they want bigger roles, or they have changed jobs. Or, you know, by 40 you've got kids, you're married, and you have to make a living. So we didn't have much of a choice. It had to be somebody a little older than I, you know. Also, something else that was necessary, but hard to find, was ambiguity. Someone who you couldn't tell about their background right away. For some reason, people think David is from England. This is strange, because David speaks with a very thick American accent. Also, people imagine him very obsessed and crazy, because his films are that way, but he's very much like Willy. He's a very sweet and a very serene person. He looks like a choirboy.

JC: How has David Lynch influenced you?

IR: He's influenced me good. In spite of the difficulties of *Blue Velvet*, he stood by me. He allowed me to yell at him when it was too rough. "What have you *done* to me?" I'd scream to him. He makes me feel good about myself, and that doesn't happen so much. We were tested a lot with *Blue Velvet*. With his glory and my being looked down on, it created a terrible conflict. I was there very often to spoil the party. He was having the big time of his life, the big success, the Academy Award nomination. So, sometimes I was there screaming and yelling and crying and took some of the wonderful pleasure of success away.

JC: What is the most difficult thing about being an actress and a model?

IR: To me, modeling is wonderful. I completely enjoy my work as a model. I think it's because I'm successful in it and there is a tremendous satisfaction. It is something that I didn't plan in my life. As for acting, maybe I'm struggling to get it. And you have the feeling of rejection. Modeling, I never looked for it and I was always accepted, and everything always went well. It's been a miracle what it's done for me, it's given me such self-confidence. I always liked images, I always liked photography, and I never thought that modeling was a way of being part of this process. I don't know why, I guess because I was overwhelmed with the idea that a model is stupid and I didn't want to be stupid. I already was bad in school. The last thing I needed was to be a model. But I have been lucky. Where I make my money is with the Lancôme campaign, which is the biggest campaign around—we do it in 130 countries, with the best photography and planning of the image. It's so interesting, you know. But I have been extremely lucky. With films I've always been somewhat marginal. I've worked a lot with independent films—it's very experimental, my work. Acting is great, but difficult, painful and complicated. It gives me more complexes than satisfaction.

JC: Why would you say you are so successful as a model?

IR: When I started modeling, I was 28 years old. Avedon says what is my success is that these layers are so in me. I was given this gift of not being wrinkled, my age didn't show, and yet I had the face of a woman, with the layers of a woman. That is probably what is partly the key to my success. I mean, it's hard to tell. Avedon was able to tell me. Bruce Weber just giggled—he says it through his pictures, you know. As we said before it's in the details. It's a very big mystery, the impact of the photo. The photos, they have to suggest something that allows you to fantasize. It's the one who looks at the picture who fills it in with their own fantasy. Pictures are made to be desired and dreamed. It's something which is in the air and few photographers can really grab on to that. But I'm always anxious with modeling because I'm afraid that, since I've started so late, I might be gone sooner than when I'm completely satisfied.

JC: Hopefully we're getting away from surface beauty and inexperience, which have been the standards, to a richness and depth of experience that lead to a more profound beauty.

IR: Yes, well . . . I certainly don't have puppy dog eyes.

Isabella Rossellini photographed by Bruce Weber.

Dichotomy. Impelled by the need to find a direction, we hurl ourselves the other way. Thrust into the flow of the search, we must look back—to memory, and ahead— to hope, as we determine the substance of the present. The riddle of pinning a particular style to postmodern art has actually expanded our ways of seeing. When there are no rules and no limitations, obviously the gate is opened for freedom to run loose. Freedom is an artist's best friend. Without the inhibiting factor of a reigning style any creative impetus can thrive and not be stifled or shaped by that 'school of the day.' The pluralistic nature of the postmodern era presents a style in and of itself. While absolute interpretation remains unclear, many artists are presenting two or multiple images for consideration. The recent popularity of the diptych has made us aware that the juxtaposition of two or more images creates a dialogue that goes further than the individual images would, were they each to stand alone. With this dialogue the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. The dialogue is its own entity, but it is intangible and relies on the parts for its very existence.

During this decade we have seen the reliance on any number of pre-explored, pre-established styles. Always these styles are pushed with a 1980's sensibility, but has there ever before been a period in art where Expressionism, Minimalism, Conceptualism, Abstraction, et.al., have hung side by side?—often in the same show. The idea of many has become the single characteristic our time.

When decisions don't come easily, perhaps there is no need for them. Is an absolute, totally inclusive answer necessary? The presentation of a choice is a statement in itself. It alleviates, or postpones, a decision while confronting the fact that we must assess the here and now in the due process of becoming.

It is in this climate that the work of Ross Bleckner comes into its important own. Bleckner works in two distinct styles: One relies on Formalist abstraction, Op Art, Appropriation, Decorative art, and even Photo-Realism. These are paintings of ornately colored, vertical stripes with hyperrealistic additions, such as birds, wreaths, ribbons and bows, that look as if they popped out of a gift shop. The stripes are not simply lines. They are saturated with an expressive quality that takes them from being mere backgrounds into becoming the primary subject of the painting. They band to form a larger character—a modulated field that demands attention.

Bleckner's other direction is dark and romantic. These paintings are done in a representational style. They are scenes of fantasy set in moody corridors, vaults, chambers and other ominous spaces that are ignited by cryptic vessels set ablaze, as if by divination. Their ambience is wrought with elegant decay that transcends any mortal place. They feel relig-

ROSS BLECKNER

Cecilia Smith

***Cage*, 1986,** oil on canvas, 108 × 72 in

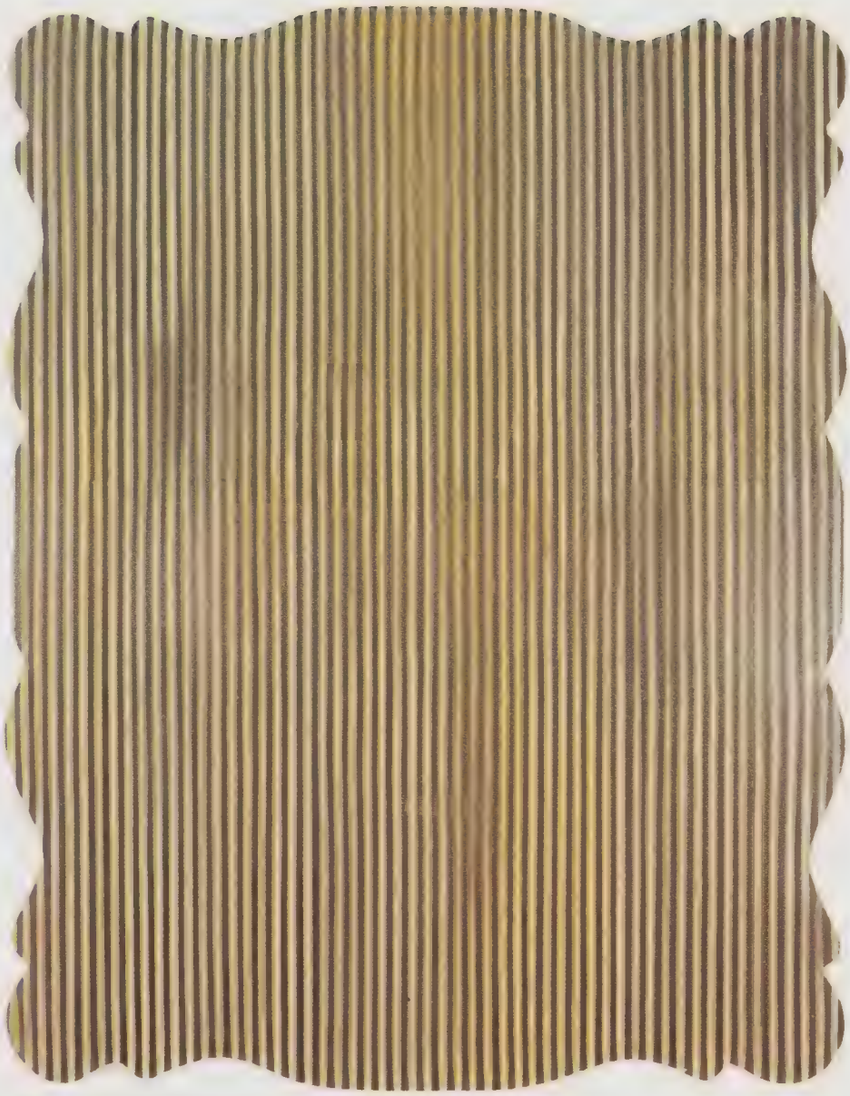
ious, yet pagan at the same time.

It is unusual, at least relative to the past, for an artist to work in two inherently different styles—both abstract and figurative. However, the manifestation of Bleckner's talent to create images that are highly appealing visually, as well as imploring emotionally, overcomes any question of his methods. The 'split screen' only makes the whole of his work that much more interesting.

Light is the common denominator. In the 'stripe paintings' it is strong and even, bathing the canvas like daylight at noon. The light seems to come from behind the white-edged bars, blurring their borders to obscure distinction into a screen. It allows the candy-box, Renoir colors to ooze, to seduce, to throb. The darks and lights play in a rhythmic, optical dance that distracts the viewer's hold on any like a solid ground, or plane of departure. A sense of dimension is further confused by the decorations scattered across the surfaces of these paintings. In *Cage*, tiny birds inhabit a straight-lined jungle of mesmerizing color. The birds are not jailed, but are strategically placed so that the idea of their wings will not let the viewer forget about freedom.

In combining an appropriational motif with the formal elements of abstraction, Bleckner has created a scenario for more important conclusions to be drawn against. By their repetitive and descending strength the stripes provide the power for the fanciful elements to suggest a higher meaning. When a perfectly painted bow emerges so real from without the scrims of bars in *Infatuation*, (a very wide painting, dense with verticality) it describes more than just a gift. Bleckner makes a metaphor for the difference between expectations and what is actually received. Infatuation is a romantic crush, an obsession that goes outside of reason or common sense and past truth and fact. A notion is drawn up that is based on nothing but desire. This is a transference of what one wants something to be onto what it actually is. The idea goes over the head of reality, and it is more exciting as an idea than anything reality could present. Think of the potential wonderment of wrapped packages beneath a Christmas tree and then the scene after the presents have been opened: strewn and ripped giftwrap, wrong sizes, duplicate ties. But while the packages are still wrapped, the mystery that prevails is infinitely tantalizing.

Perhaps the ultimate expectation is death. Bleckner blatantly confronts that issue in *Remember Them*. The title's words are blind-embossed, like a ghostly hint, under the red, white and black bars in a haunting message that pleads for and then demands immortality; that in the end we are remembered, that our spirit is given a place to kindle and remain alive, perpetuated by the living. The edges of the canvas have been curvily cut into the stylized shape of an emblem. The piece



***Remember Them*, 1987,** oil on canvas, 111 × 85 1/2 in

***The Gate*, 1985,** oil on linen, 48 × 40 in

is a memorial—a shrine and a shield.

History and memory hang like shrouds, hovering in the layered atmospheres of Bleckner's representational works. These phantasmal environments are reminiscent of Whistler's and Turner's dark backgrounds and firework lighting. But Bleckner's light is not as abrupt or sparkling. It shimmers and falls like a shower, a curtain of etheral emission, in *One Day Fever*. The painting is rife with funereal imagery. Only the feet and lower legs can be seen of a rising figure on an unknown ascendence. Dreamy flowers dominate the foreground and the characteristic silvery urn sits solid in the lower right-hand corner, attesting to the lingering spirit. The figure is dismissed, is given over to the falling light. It is freed from the ground. Freed from earthly obligations. But the urn burns constant, in place of the departing soul. The flowers grace the sentiment, something pretty for those that mourn.

Sense of loss.

Sense of freedom.

Freedom is loss.

Ultimate freedom is letting go of everything tangible. Bleckner's complex, antique rooms serve as tombs for the noncorporal essence of life. They are monochromatic, like duotone photographs, where blue or brown is toned over the positive black areas and only one color is discernible. These paintings are glazed, layer on layer, so that the light is brought in deeper and deeper while at the same time it is reflected back; and so a wonderful reciprocity for the range of sentiments at work here envelops the viewer. This reiteration and return again reminds us of the spirit's departure from the everlasting sepulchre that bears witness to its passing.

Although these brooding works seem so different from the optimistic stripes, the two styles actually do depend on each other. A fossil-like wrought-iron gate is almost transparent against the dark background in *Gate*. Its upright filigree seems practically to decompose before our eyes. It is a synthesis of the bright stripes and the decorations that frequent their surfaces. But the gate offers more hope. It reminds us that even in the darkness there is an opening, a chance. The stripes are so confident on first glance, but upon closer examination they really don't offer any opportunity for redemption. They are a sham. They only remind us that what you see, or what you expect to see, is seldom, if ever, what you get.

Finally, the paintings are linked by the transcendent property of light. Bleckner presents light as the only power over death, as a revealer of truth, a purveyor of faith. Light as good. Darkness as evil. Bleckner combines the two in his exploration of the sensations involved in finality and memory, of history and lastingness and of reality and hope.

***Twelve Nights*, 1986,** oil on canvas, 76×62 in.

***One Day Fever*, 1986,** oil on linen, 48×40 in

***The Holy Bible*, 1986-1987,** Bible and steel armature, 8 × 5 1/2 × 84 in

TIM ROLLINS + K.O.S.

Thomas Beller

***Study for Amerika VII*, 1987,** gold watercolor on bookpages on linen, 24 × 42 in

***Black Alice*, 1982-86,** black and blue acrylic, black gesso on bookpages, 72 × 126 in.

Tim Rollins and K.O.S. make paintings that cross boundaries. Their art is composed of the process as much as the product, which the group considers a means rather than an end. The boundaries they cross are visual, conceptual, and recently, economic. With their inclusion in the Satchi's *New York Art Now* show in London, they implicity crossed the boundary that separates artists whose work is receiving attention in the art world from those who are not.

K.O.S. stands for "Kids of Survival." They are a group of teenagers, ages 13-19, who were initially diagnosed by the public school system as having learning disabilities. Seven years ago Rollins went out to the South Bronx to teach, and came into contact with these kids. He came up with a formula for the workshop that is now called "Art and Knowledge."

"Art and Knowledge" is largely composed of kids who have learning disabilities. It is open to anyone who wants to join, but the serious commitment involved has kept its membership fairly constant. Most of K.O.S. are kids who would have fallen through the educational cracks. The idea was born out of Rollins' conviction that there were other ways in which these kids could express their intelligence. Specifically, this involves drawing.

To describe the artwork that Tim Rollins and K.O.S. produce one must begin by describing the process. The group reads a text such as *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Alice in Wonderland*, Kafka's *Amerika*, or *The Scarlet Letter*. Then they discuss the text and come to a consensus on what single image might best represent their reaction to the text. In the case of *The Red Badge of Courage* it was a wound, for *Amerika* it was a horn like those that appeared in the last chapter, for *The Scarlet Letter*, it was an "A."

Once this image is decided upon each individual starts making studies for his interpretation. According to George Garces, "We keep working on the studies until we have the one that we think is right." Then the book in question is literally deconstructed, taken apart page by page. The pages are pasted on the canvas in rows. It is over this that each image, once decided upon, is grafted.

The text on the canvas presents itself in a rigid, gridlike pattern. Each square occupies its own space on the canvas, and within each page there is another smaller square of print. The lines of the print add to the visual stratification. There is something appealing about the look of text on canvas and Rollins admits that part of that aesthetic can be rooted in his affinity for some of the minimal conceptual work of the seventies. The visual regiment of the text is also the backdrop on which the defiant transgressions of K.O.S.'s symbols are painted. It is the way the Horns, the *A*s, and the wounds, move over, across, and through these delineated boundaries on the canvas that some of the agitating energy of the paintings is communicated.

A particularly good illustration of the collaborative process involved in Tim Rollins and K.O.S. is the *Amerika* series. After reading the text of *Amerika*, Kafka's comic novel about a young man who arrives in New York from Europe to seek his fortune, the group decided on the image of a golden horn. In the book's epiphany, the main character comes across a huge throng of people all playing different golden horns. Then Rollins came up with an assignment. "If you could represent your voice, your freedom, your destiny, and everything that is you, in the form of a golden horn, what would it look like?"

The immediate results were not auspicious. "We went through about a year of Prince Valiant-type horns. Then slowly the kids started diverging, out of boredom, until we eventually came to what we have now." What they have now are horns that each have a distinctly unique nature, apart from each other and apart from anything anyone might have conceived a horn to look like. Each horn is grafted onto the painting after discussion on its placement. The effect is a visual cacophony

"It is almost like a battle painting," says Rollins, "with each horn battling for its own sense of time, their own space, their own dignity, and their own voice. It is that element of struggle that I think fuels whatever is good about America."

In *The Scarlet Letter*, a new piece to be shown for the first time in March, a red letter "A" is drawn in various permutations. Each one reflects an individual interpretation of the badge that the book's main character must wear. That a text's meaning might be evoked by the violation of the physical entity of the text is a boundary-breaking act in itself. The book's emotion, theme, and imagery are expanded from the singular narrative voice that propels the text. The use of various diverse versions of the same image further distances the method of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. from traditional methods of verbal and visual narration. Yet with the creation of this distance, the painting succeeds in capturing the essence of the precious and at once ironic aspect of Hester's badge in *The Scarlet Letter*, while creating a kinetic visual tension, achieved largely by the contrast of the supple and carefully crafted *A*s against the sharply delineated grid pattern of the paper and print.

Another piece called *Black Alice* is composed of what at first appears to be a canvas filled with black paint, leaving room in the margin between the paint and the end of the canvas so that some of *Alice in Wonderland*'s text is visible. The painting, in fact, has a large Alice delineated within it.

Tim Rollins and K.O.S. have also done a *Blue Alice*. The night blue was made to match the South Bronx sky. Of all the boundaries that Tim Rollins and K.O.S., and Rollins in particular, cross, the most fundamental is in their definition. They are not mixed media artists, they are artists *as* mixed media. The group functions in an educational context, an art context, and a community activist context. The work is sight specific, though the site is not necessarily the South Bronx. The site is, as Rollins puts it, "any community."

"Within the American fabric there is a great deal

of frustration and anger at not being able to represent yourself," said Rollins recently, sitting in his studio as K.O.S. filtered in after the school day. "We tap into that. People, particularly in this community, are tired of being misrepresented. They want to start being independent, controlling their own housing. It's going to be like the sixties without lame brain utopianism."

The activities of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. make it very difficult for them to be categorized as one type of group or another, something that Rollins feels would be the first step in limiting their ability to manifest their theory in practice. "I want to start my own school in which art is the base of the curriculum," says Rollins. His experience within the public school system has made him acutely aware of what problems exist and the extent to which the system can assimilate practical revisions in the way it is run." "Revolutionary" is a word that Rollins can deal with, but not "idealistic." This isn't because he or the group as a whole isn't well described by the latter, but rather because Rollins feels a word like idealistic condemns their attempts to create physical changes as a result of their work.

"People call you idealistic when they want you to fail," asserts Rollins. "Another word I don't like is 'pure'." This is a specific reference to those critics who have questioned whether the group can retain its legitimacy now that their art has begun to sell at such high prices. "Pure is another word people use when they want you to fail. The only pure group is a group that doesn't exist."

The money that is made off of the art is put into a trust that can be drawn on for personal reasons and is also earmarked for financing further Tim Rollins and K.O.S. projects. This relates closely to the idea that the artworks are not an end but a means.

Yet if Tim Rollins and K.O.S. are to continue being successful, they must continue to question themselves as well as their surroundings. As Rollins puts it, "success is dangerous for any artist. When what you are doing is bringing in the money, why change what you are doing?" Success is indeed dangerous, and for Tim Rollins and K.O.S., the danger has an added dimension. The group's poignancy and power are reflected in the artworks, yet its source lies elsewhere. It lies in their ability to agitate, to make the viewer uneasy, and to avoid being defined. Success in the gallery context is also an implicit confinement to the gallery context. And that would be the beginning of their artistic demise. The coincidence of commercial ascent and artistic descent would not be a first.

Yet Tim Rollins and K.O.S. are aware of the situation and have addressed it in a piece to be shown for the first time in March. It is the tenth painting in the *Amerika* series and it will have a large golden X across it. A cancellation. It is a statement of self-doubt. An X across the tenth piece of one of their most successful series is their way of questioning their ability to question, to voice dissent. It is a self-inflicted wound. A doubting of the success the project has had.

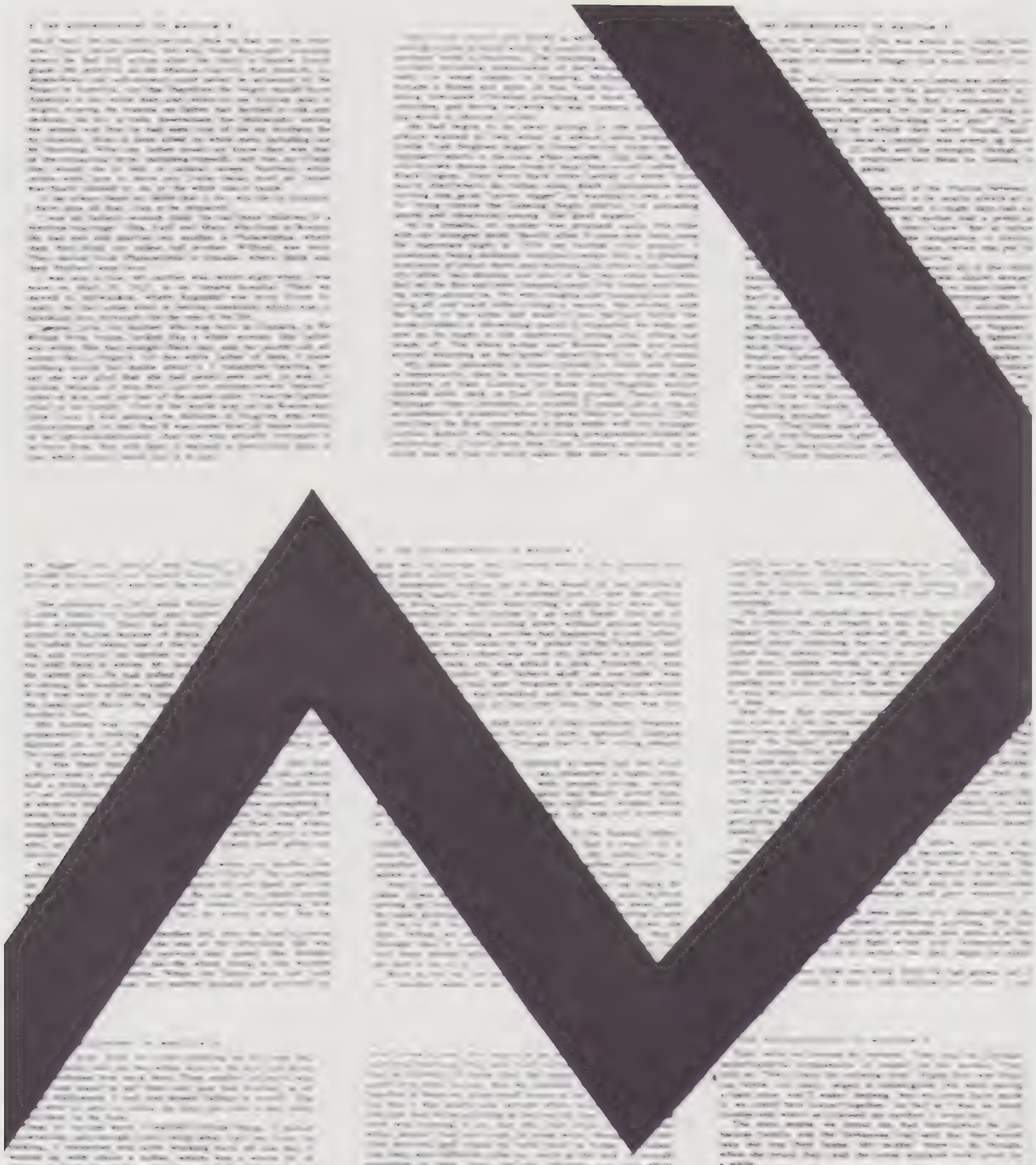
This doubting is not an insecure comment; rather it is meant to raise the question of how far the group can go towards achieving its agenda while having the art exist solely in the context of a gallery or museum space. It is a reminder to viewers that Tim Rollins and K.O.S. strive to communicate to people beyond the art world, and that if the group can only achieve success in that context, it may have failed. The cancellation is a goad, both to the viewers and the makers.

The shape of the cancellation is also the Roman numeral for its number in the series. As much as it cancels, it commemorates. And in so doing draws attention to the fine line between celebration and cancellation. The celebration of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. in the art world can lead to their cancellation. They are acutely aware of the possibility of becoming a token presence in the art world and the world at large. Rollins wants the significance of Tim Rollins and K.O.S. to be the results of their practice, not their governing theories. "This will not be another group that does incredible things and then fails miserably," asserts Rollins. "I don't want this to be another situation in which every body ends up drained and burnt-out with nothing to show for it other than one more notch on the bedpost of good causes."

Through this awareness, the group is striving to avoid that fate. They understand that once they become tokens, they lose their ability to make people uncomfortable because they are grippable, graspable, definable. They are currently avoiding that through their status of artists as mixed media, through the cancellation in *Amerika X*, and also through the horns themselves. The horn itself is a pun, a dual image, representing a musical instrument capable of producing placating harmony, and also an instrument classically associated with the call for battle.

The question is which one of these options does the painting evoke? The answer is both, though each meaning is inverted. The aspect of the horn that is a cry to battle becomes a battle cry against destructiveness. The element that involves harmony becomes a statement. Through the unique aspect of each horn and the different sounds each would make, the image produces the aural equivalent of harmony through dissonance. The very image of a horn connotes an entirely different sensory experience with its own values and connotations, and in so doing, refers at once to infinite possibilities and to the inescapable interrelatedness of disciplines, senses, and socio-economic relations. *Amerika*'s horns are a symbolic bridge between, among other things, Soho and the South Bronx.

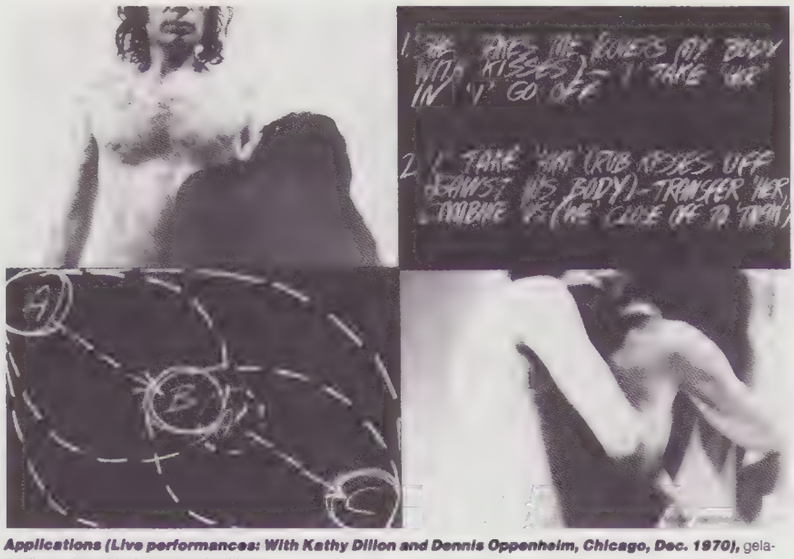
America X the cancellation, is not a negative piece. It is not a rejection as much as it is a reminder. It is Tim Rollins and K.O.S.'s way of footnoting the moment, reminding the audience, and perhaps themselves, of the means and of the ends.



***By Any Means Necessary* · *Nightmare*, 1986,** black gesso on bookpages on linen, 21 × 28 in.

VITO ACCONCI

Margaret Sundell + Thomas Beller



Applications (Live performances: With Kathy Dillon and Dennis Oppenheim, Chicago, Dec. 1970), gelatin silver prints with drawings, 40 × 60 in.

Vito Acconci was one of the early pioneers of performance art. His work in the late sixties and early seventies played a large role in the overall re-evaluation of the meaning of art that was taking place at the time. His performances garnered a great deal of attention and he became somewhat of a cult figure in the art world.

Covered in concrete, in the midst of preparation for his opening at the Museum of Modern Art, Acconci met with us at his ravaged studio on the Brooklyn waterfront.

VITO ACCONCI: Sorry this place is such a mess. It's kind of chaotic, getting ready for the show.

SUNDELL/BELLER: If you were preparing a major museum show say, 15 years ago, how would things have been different?

VA: Actually, it probably would have been just as chaotic. Maybe even more chaotic. 15 years ago, when I was doing live pieces, one thing that interested me about that work was being on the spot. I was almost a stand-up comedian. So in that way, I probably would have promoted a chaotic situation.

S/B: Weren't you a poet before you started doing live work?

VA: Yeah.

S/B: Why did you initially make the decision to leave writing?

VA: Because towards the end of the time I was writing, I started to be more and more committed to the idea of a page as a space to move over. I became obsessed with things like, how do you go from left margin to right margin? How do you go from one page to the next? I was really using the page as a space for me, as writer, to travel over. And in turn, a space to you, as reader, to travel over. Gradually it occurred to me that if I was so interested in moving over a space, why was I limiting myself to an 8 1/2 x 11" piece of paper? Why didn't I walk on the floor? It seems like a lot of my first pieces were a way to get off the page, out of a closed room, and throw myself outside into the world. But those pieces also seem to be so much about closure, and maybe that comes from my writing background.

S/B: In what way?

VA: Well, the act of writing poetry is so much the notion of a person alone with a page. *This* kind of closed system. Reading is like that as well. That's obviously where my work started. It started with privacy, and writing's a very private thing.

S/B:* Following Piece *is very much like that.

VA: That piece almost exactly duplicates the relationship between writer and reader.

S/B: So how do you see your early live work as distinct from writing?

VA: I see it as sculpture.

S/B: But in that work the body not only relates to space, but is actually a site from which meaning is generated. It seems odd to refer to it as sculpture.

VA: I think the reason that the word "sculpture" seemed so important to me, and to other artists doing live work at that time, was to separate what we were doing from theatre. That's also the reason we objected so much to the term "performance". Performance meant theatre.

S/B: Why did you dislike theatre?

VA: I think it was related to the reason why I found museums to be questionable. Museum meant isolation space. At that time, I was struck by the fact that a kind of conventional museum architecture had developed—the museum as a building made of concrete with no windows on the outside. The museum set itself up as a kind of fortress, separating what's inside of the mu-

He was small	page 1
Until after he was growing up	page 2
For a while he was growing	page 3
As well as much as an	page 4
Inch at a time by	page 5
The time he would look on	page 6
Each occasion until as time	page 7
Passed each had gone	page 8
By as he went past them	page 9
Up to the time when he could look	page 10
Back to those times when as far	page 11
As he could remember he had	page 12
Been small and also smaller	page 13
And even the smallest he had	page 14
Ever been as well	page 15
As when he was as	page 16
Tall as he could remember having	page 17
Been which was	page 18
Yesterday being that he did	page 19
Not look today yet as it	page 20
Were at himself as he	page 21
Was although as	page 22
It is he is preparing	page 23
To do that at least	page 24
He is as to the small	page 25
Of his back although if	page 26
He takes a larger view this makes	page 27
Him feel small though not when	page 28
No one looks as he does while look-	page 29
Ing back all the same as if	page 30
To see if they ever looked like	page 31
Him one at a time	page 32
At any time he could count on.	page 33

seum from what's outside. The implication being that art must be preserved from everyday life. Theatre seemed to have that same kind of isolation space, and I wanted to do work that wasn't isolated, but was part of an overall system. Part of everyday life. One thing that interested me in the notion of a gallery space is that when a person goes to a gallery, you don't just go to one, you go to twenty in one day. So a gallery is more of a pass-through space, making it somewhat analogous to the way you experience things on the street.

S/B: And in works like Following Piece, *it actually was something you experienced on the street.*

VA: I don't really consider that piece a performance. It was more of an activity that by means of photograph, of documentation, of reportage, was made available to somebody else. I would separate that from something done in a gallery where people could come into physical contact with the piece. Or from something like the piece I did of telling secrets at a pier. There was an announcement so that people could come there with that in mind.

S/B: And Step Piece *which was performed in your own apartment.*

VA: That's right. The announcement invited people to come and see the work. Nobody did. But it was still something I would think of as public. Whereas in *Following Piece*, there really was no viewer. Or rather, I was the viewer of the person walking. It was really something done privately with the intention that later it was going to be made known to others.

S/B: Is what qualified it as a work of art the activity itself, or the fact that it was going to become known?

VA: I think the fact that it became known. I can't think of a private art. To me, art is about making something known. In some way there has to be a viewer. Either a reader after the fact, as in the case of *Following Piece*, or someone who is involved in an intimate relationship with me because of a piece. If I'm telling somebody a secret, all of a sudden this person is hearing something that they don't necessarily want to know.

S/B: Could you tell us one of those secrets?

VA: No. The secrets were ridiculous. I wasn't that bad. But I can't tell you because part of the piece was that once I told someone something they had to be in control of that secret. A kind of bargain was going on. The bit about the piece was that I don't think there were more than four or five things worth telling. So I realized the piece wasn't really about secrets as much as it was about using secrets as an excuse to start some kind of relationship with a person. I don't think that this ordinary activity itself could define the piece as art. The combination of this activity with another person maybe could.

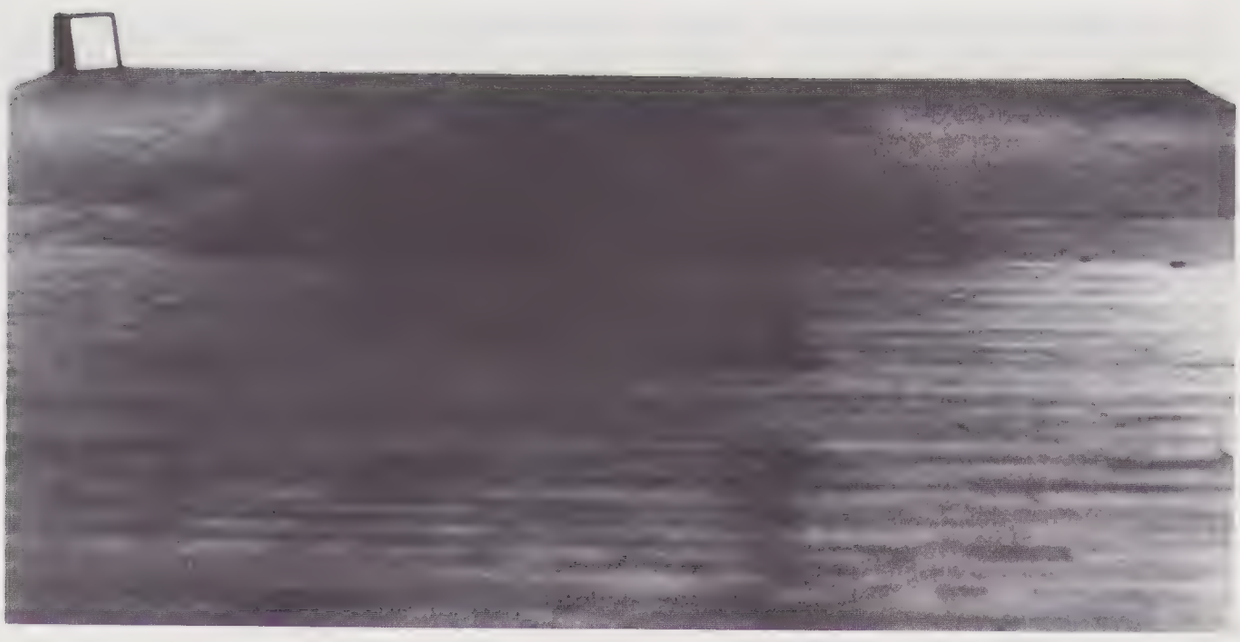
S/B: You said you didn't want to associate your work with theatre. One way you avoided that was by never letting the viewer be passive. Your work constantly makes the viewer aware of the activity of viewing.

VA: That's been a constant in my work. One thing that was always a starting point for me, and that has always bothered me about art, was the "Do Not Touch" sign. When you're young and you discover something for the first time, you pick it up, you touch it, you taste it. But in art, the tradition has always been "Don't Touch". And this leads to the commodification of art, because if you can only *see* something, you desire it. If you can touch it, however, it's yours, it's in your world, and you don't have to desire it anymore. I think that's always been an important part of my work, that people could touch me, or I could touch them.

S/B: Could you tell us a little more about why you chose to focus on your own person as the subject of your art?

Command Performance, video installation, 112 Greene St., New York, January 1974.

The space, as given is bisected by a line of columns running down its length, from front to back. Farthest from the entrance, at the foot of one column, a video monitor faces a white stool placed at a second column; the stool is lit from above by a spotlight, and continuously shot by a video camera that shows the stool on a monitor in front of a third column, facing the entrance. The first monitor has a fixed tape; I'm lying down, seen from above, the way a doctor — or a mortician — would see me; I'm addressing a viewer who might be sitting on the white stool, inviting a viewer to sit on the stool and appear on screen, on the second monitor, putting on a show for the other viewers as they come in.



Seedbed, performance/installation, Sonnabend Gallery, New York, January 1972.

A conventional gallery room twenty-five feet by forty feet; halfway across the room the floor turns into a ramp that rises to a height of two feet at the far wall. The piece is one of three pieces of mine in the gallery, one in each room, each performed live; the performances alternate, while the setting for each room remains in place. This piece, then, is activated three times a week; each day, the piece lasts from opening time to closing time, from 10AM to 6PM: I'm under the ramp, I'm moving around under the floor where viewers walk, I'm maintaining a constant masturbation — in order to do this, I use the viewers as an aid, I build up sexual fantasies on viewers' footsteps, my fantasies keep my masturbation going.

(The viewer, entering the gallery, walks across the floor and, almost without thinking about it, up the ramp. The viewer hears my voice come up from below: " . . . the person to my left . . . I'm doing this with you now . . . I'm touching your hair . . . I'm running my hand down your back . . . I'm touching your ass . . . " Whenever I happen to reach a climax, the viewer might want to pick himself of herself out of the crowd, the viewer might want to think: he's done this for me, he's done this with me, he's done this because of me.)

VA: At that time, I was very interested in the idea of art. I thought of myself as possibly trying to define art. And it seemed to me that in Western culture, whenever you consider a work of art, there's always the implication that "somebody did that". Western culture doesn't really have a tradition of anonymous art.

S/B: You mean seeing art as a series of masterpieces by great masters?

VA: Yes. And if that's true, one could consider the art terms to be something going from art doer, through art object, to art viewer. If those were the art terms, the question that came up for me was how could you condense those terms? Could you go directly from art doer to art viewer? Once I started thinking along those lines, art became a kind of presentation of self. If I'm going from me to you, obviously, I'm presenting myself. One of the reasons I began dealing with my own person was an attempt to define and redefine art: to bring art down to its roots.

S/B: But did you ever feel trapped by the notoriety that your performance work incurred?

VA: Definitely. I thought my work was about breaking roles, yet those pieces were setting such a definite role for me. I think that was the contradiction that eventually led me away from live work. Even though my pieces were activities that anyone could do, there would be this photograph of *me* doing it. I found myself becoming a kind of cult hero. I was becoming everything I thought I hated about art—art as religion, artwork as altar, artist as priest. It seemed that my work was not only falling into, it was confirming, that attitude. Once that became clear to me, I felt that I had to disappear from my work.

S/B: Your work has changed tremendously over the years. How do you think this change in conception of your own role in the art process might have influenced the nature of your work?

VA: When I began to do work in the early '70s, whether consciously or not, I think I bought into an idea of the self that was a part of that time period. A notion of the self as something that you find or develop almost by withdrawing, almost by absenting yourself from the self and entering a meditation chamber. Whether it be drugs, or a real meditation chamber. In other words, you make an effort to discover this thing called "self".

S/B: Your own, or everybody else's as well?

VA: Well, I think the notion of the self in general. In the '60s, the self was really thought of as an object rather than as an instrument. By the mid-70s, I began to think that maybe that was an over-simplification. Maybe you can't isolate the self. Maybe the self only exists as part of a social system, an economic system, a political system, a cultural system. And as I began to think in that way, I found that I didn't know how to use my own person in my pieces anymore. When I was using my own person, my work was always about this kind of intimate investigation. Either of myself, or of my relationship with another. That seems so typical of the sixties. I started to think that that intimate space that led to a psychological notion of the self was possibly an escapist space. Examining oneself, pointing out the faults in oneself. Two people together, pointing out faults in each others' selves. Maybe that was really a way of avoiding the flaws in the larger system.

S/B: Were your later works meant to address flaws on that larger scale?

VA: Yes. I'm not sure it always works, but I'd like to think that.

S/B: How do you think it might accomplish that?

VA: It seems that my work is always composed of conventions that the people of a certain culture know

Claim, performance at 93 Grand St., New York, September 1971

A two-level space. At street-level, there's a video monitor next to the door leading downstairs to the basement; the monitor functions as an announcement, a warning — once the viewer sees and hears my activity on the monitor, the viewer decides whether or not to open the door and go downstairs. In the basement, I'm seated on a chair at the foot of the stairs; I'm blindfolded, I have with me two lead pipes and a crow bar; I'm talking continuously, talking aloud, talking to myself: " . . . I'm alone here in the basement . . . I want to stay alone here in the basement . . . I don't want anybody to be here in the basement with me . . . I'll stop anybody from coming down here to the basement . . . I want to stay alone here in the basement . . . " (The piece lasts three hours. The talk is designed to hypnotize myself: whenever I hear something, or someone, on the stairs, I swing one of my weapons in front of me, bang my weapon down on the stairs in front of me. The talk should drive me into a state where killing is possible — more precisely, where killing doesn't have to be considered but is only a by-product of possession.)

***Face of the Earth*, 1984,** public sculpture.

***Following Piece*,** activity, "Street Works IV", Architectural League of New York, October 1969. Photo: Betsy Jackson.

almost by habit. When the pieces work a collision of conventions occurs that leads a person to question those assumptions and conventions. By turning those conventions upside down, the viewer starts to think, what power does this convention really imply?

S/B: Or impose on me.

VA: Exactly.

S/B: What piece might do that?

VA: *Instant House* is a good example. There's a swing surrounded by four panels. When you sit on the swing, it goes down and the panels rise up around you. The panels have American flags on the inside and Soviet flags on the outside. So you make one kind of house for yourself, but that house announces another kind of house, another kind of power, to others. In my work from the early '80s, what interested me was that the pieces put the viewer in a position where he literally raised some power sign of the culture. But one problem I had with those pieces was that I was afraid that, without knowing it, they were incredibly reactionary.

S/B: In what way?

VA: In the isolated situation of a museum or gallery space, it's very easy for a viewer to think he's on the right side. For example, there's a piece from 1980 called *High Rise*. The piece consisted of a stack of panels on one end of the space and about 50 feet away, on the other end of the space, there's a little cart. The viewer gets in the cart and pulls himself towards the panels. The panels start to rise into what eventually becomes a 25 foot high four story building. The building has doors and windows on one side and on the other side is a 25 foot high red spray-painted grafitti penis. So on the one hand, you become a little child again, playing in a cart. But on the other hand, you're also raising this 25 foot high male altar. As soon as you stop using the cart, the penis dwindles down into dust. In other words, the architecture lasts only so long as you keep the vehicle going. In a lot of ways it's like a test-your-strength game at a carnival. It was very easy to raise the thing two stories. It took a little more will to raise the third story, the fourth story...

S/B: To get it all the way up.

VA: Yeah. My problem was that I began seeing that in the kind of laboratory situation that the gallery space actually is, away from accidents that can happen in the real world, it's very easy for a male to say, I know this is some kind of cartoon version of maleness, so now I'll knock this penis down.

S/B: And feel a little righteous about it at the same time.

VA: I wondered if these pieces made the viewer feel very smug, and in doing so, if they over-simplified the problem.

S/B: Is your more recent public work, work that is entirely outside the gallery space, an attempt to rectify that problem?

VA: The more I think in terms of public space, the more I want a space where the viewer feels familiar. Even more than before, I tend to make work composed of conventions that everybody knows. So that when you come upon something, it looks like a house, it looks like furniture, it looks like the world you know.

S/B: In other words, it doesn't announce itself as art.

VA: If something doesn't announce itself as art, it's just something else in the world. And that quality of appearance seems to be what interests me more now. It seems almost like in the beginning, I was trying to define art. Now I'm trying to use art as an instrument in a larger world.

S/B: In the early '80s, as your work began to investigate the construction of the public self versus the pri-

vate self, you said that one of your goals was to make people question their own role in the formation of that public sphere. Do you feel that in your most recent work, by making it more accessible, you have lost that critical edge?

VA: Sure. I'm not doing it as directly anymore. One of my questions about pieces like *High Rise* and *Instant House* was, am I making a fool out of the viewer? I don't think that I do. Questions like that made me move away from that type of work. But as a by-product, I may have lost what I see as the issue. I want the viewer to discover the issue for himself. I'm not sure if that will really work. What potentially bothers me about recent work is that it becomes just a chair, just a place to sit down. And everybody likes to sit down.

S/B: By courting this non-art audience, do you mean to reject the art audience?

VA: No. I think the art viewing audience is part of the world. I might be rejecting art problems. But I don't think my work ever dealt really with art problems. I don't think I'm leaving out the art viewer, but I might be leaving out the art viewer in his role *as* art viewer.

S/B: Do you feel you were focusing on that role in your early work?

VA: I was doing it almost without realizing it. I thought my early work was about a kind of commonplace activity and a commonplace psychology. But only people in an art audience could possibly even recognize it. And that goes back to something we were discussing earlier, when I was saying how questioning and defining art seemed much more important to me in the past. Now, working in public space, I'm not even sure I want my work to be seen as art. One reason I want to work in public space is because it's a place where there isn't an art viewer. There are only passers-by. In a gallery or museum space, you can do almost anything you want to the viewer. By announcing themselves as an art viewer, the person is almost announcing himself as willing to be the victim of an art experience. (Until recently, my work was much more the attacking of a viewer. In public space, you don't have that kind of luxury). Whether it was early live stuff, like the piece, *Claim*, where I was in a basement threatening people with a crowbar, to pieces in the mid-70s where I wasn't present, installations with audio tape.

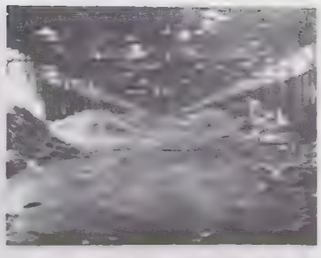
S B: Like Command Performance *?*

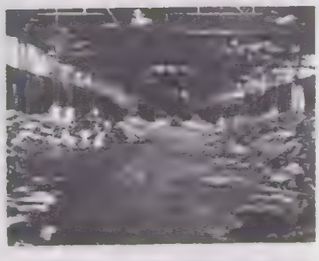
VA: That was about the last live piece I did and it was almost as if I knew it. That piece said "I'm not going to do live performances anymore." Putting the viewer in my place I was commanding the viewer to do something—because "*I'm* not going to do it anymore." In that piece, my voice was a very taunting presence. But more recently, there's been a change. My work is now more a space that the viewer discovers for himself.

S/B: Certainly you're much more embracing of the people who look at your work now than you were. If there's been any continuity, it's been a gradual process of acceptance towards the viewer.

VA: In a lot of ways it's like a child growing up. First you recognize yourself, then you recognize another person, then you recognize a whole mess of people, and eventually, you realize you can leave the room and it still exists even when you aren't there. But it's true. *Claim* and a lot of pieces from that time, were based on a kind of "I—you" relation between the person in the role of artist and the person in the role of viewer. In retrospect, it seems to me that what I really wanted to do in those pieces was to find a way to say a very simple "hello". But I didn't know how to make a "hello" make sense. So I used the opposite approach. Let me say "goodbye" as hard as possible. So that maybe eventually a kind of "hello" would come out of it.

Untitled (Project for Pier 17), activity, Pier 17, New York, March-April 1971. Photos: Kathy Dillon.





The announcement should have the feel of a whisper in the dark, or a secret phone call. (Because it is not addressed to one specific person, it will have to appear as an ad, or on a gallery.) The meeting place has to be chosen with this in mind: it should put both the visitor and me on shaky ground.

— FROM MARCH 27 TO APRIL 24, 1971, I WILL BE AT PIER 17 (AN ABANDONED PIER AT WEST STREET AND PARK PLACE, NEW YORK CITY) AT 1 AM EACH NIGHT; I WILL BE ALONE, AND WILL WAIT AT THE FAR END OF THE PIER FOR ONE HOUR.

The pier, at night, is unfamiliar and, possibly, dangerous: the visitor should be warned to bring a flashlight. (Visitors might tend to come in groups. My intention, however, is to meet each person individually, so that he alone will have possession of the information given.)

— TO ANYONE COMING TO MEET ME, I WILL ATTEMPT TO REVEAL SOMETHING I WOULD NORMALLY KEEP CONCEALED: CENSURABLE OCCURRENCES AND HABITS, FEARS, JEALOUSIES — SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN REVEALED BEFORE AND THAT WOULD BE DISTURBING FOR ME TO MAKE PUBLIC.

Each visitor will be taking the chance that the meeting is a failure. I might have nothing to tell, or I might give him trivial or perversely transmitted information. (The visitor might want to manipulate me for the purpose of drawing out more significant confessions.)

— I WILL DOCUMENT NONE OF THE MEETING. EACH VISITOR, THEN, CAN MAKE ANY DOCUMENTATION HE WISHES, FOR ANY PURPOSE; THE RESULT SHOULD BE THAT HE BRING HOME MATERIAL WHOSE REVELATION COULD WORK TO MY DISADVANTAGE — MATERIAL FOR BLACKMAIL.

Performance as self-exclusive point of view (person as observed by others than himself): performance as response of an organization (performer as conformer — performance as threat — performance as release): performance as goal (some thing to 'dig into'): the performer can make unwitting mistakes (snake behind counter to the assignment on purpose might be making it).

UNTITLED PROJECT FOR PIER 17 ANNOUNCEMENT AT JOHN GIBSON GALLERY, NEW YORK

— Vito Acconci

GUADALAJARA

PHOTOGRAPHY ENRIQUE BADULESCU
STYLING WENDY SCHECHTER
HAIR TROY HALTERMAN FOR JUDY CASEY
MAKEUP TROY HALTERMAN FOR VICKY COLE
MODEL TIERNEY / FORD

CLOTHING
ISAIA
BETSEY JOHNSON
GAULTIER

SHOES
MAUD FRIZON

fantast

Photography
Nick Vaccaro

Styling
Reiko Clark

Hair + Makeup
Michael D'Apice for Katie Daley
Melanie Rau

Photo Assistant
Sandy How

1
Comme des Garçons
Matsuda

Caron Bernstein / Ford
Kathy Law / Ford

2
Comme des Garçons
Yohji Yamamoto
Matsuda

Kathy Law / Ford
Amy Kaizer / Boy-Girl
William Weichert / Boy-Girl

3
Yohji Yamamoto

Amy Kaiser / Boy-Girl
Mika Rascais

4
Matsuda

Kathy Law / Ford

Top: Grave of Paul Gauguin, Hiva Oa Island, 1932. Bottom: Emile a Tai, Gauguin's Tahitian son, with Tahura a Tai, Gauguin's mistress, who posed for many of the artist's paintings. 1932. Only known photograph in existence. Photos: Wilmon Menard.

AUTHOR IN SEARCH OF AN ARTIST

Wilmon Menard

I wanted to go there because I had long had the idea of writing a novel based on the life of Gauguin... and I hoped to find (in Tahiti) matter that would be useful to me.

—*Looking Back*, Somerset Maugham

I am no longer conscious of the days and hours, of good and evil. The happiness is so strange at times that it suppresses the very conception of it. I only know that all is good, because all is so beautiful.

—*Noa-Noa*, Paul Gauguin

When I first met William Somerset Maugham in the early 1950s in his Villa Mauresque on St. Jean Cap Ferrat of the French Riviera—an appointment finally arranged for a series of interviews and researches for my ultimately published book, *The Two Worlds of Somerset Maugham*—I was immediately impressed with his art collection, largely of the impressionists. In every room of his Moorish-style villa, on the walls in hallways and stairways, there was an arresting original canvas of a most exemplary selection acquired over many years: Monet, Renoir, Picasso, Toulouse-Lautrec, Pissarro, Bonnard, Marie Laurencin, Lépine, Matisse, Utrillo, and others, conscientiously displayed, for optimum effect, for the pleasure of himself and his guests. The collection at this time had been conservatively appraised at close to $4 million.

Maugham led me up to the flat roof of his villa, from where I had a superb view of his landscaped fourteen acres bordering the blue sunlit Mediterranean; and then across to his penthouse-study, rather monastic except for the unique Gauguin painting, executed on the upper six glass panes of a door, that had been fitted snugly into a window facing the sea. I recalled

Gauguin's reference to this work: "A simple church window, fascinating because of its clearly differentiated colours and figures, resembling in a way a piece of music. How bitter to admit that I was born to be an artist craftsman and cannot achieve my vocation. The fact is, I am far more gifted for making stained glass and ceramics, designing furniture and such, than for painting in the strict meaning of the word."

When we were seated, Maugham said quietly: "A Tahitian Eve in the Polynesian garden-paradise, holding the fatal apple in her hand."

The appropriate substitution for the apple of the Biblical Eden, held by Gauguin's teen-age Tahitian mistress and model, Pau'ura a Tai (whom he referred to as "Tahura" in his volume of Tahitian impressions, *Noa-Noa*), is the indigenous fruit of most Pacific islands, the uru, or breadfruit, the islanders' staff-of-life.

Then Maugham related the series of encounters which had eventually taken him around the world to Tahiti and into the hut of a native in a palm-shaded coastal village, where he had saved the fragile study on glass from vandalism.

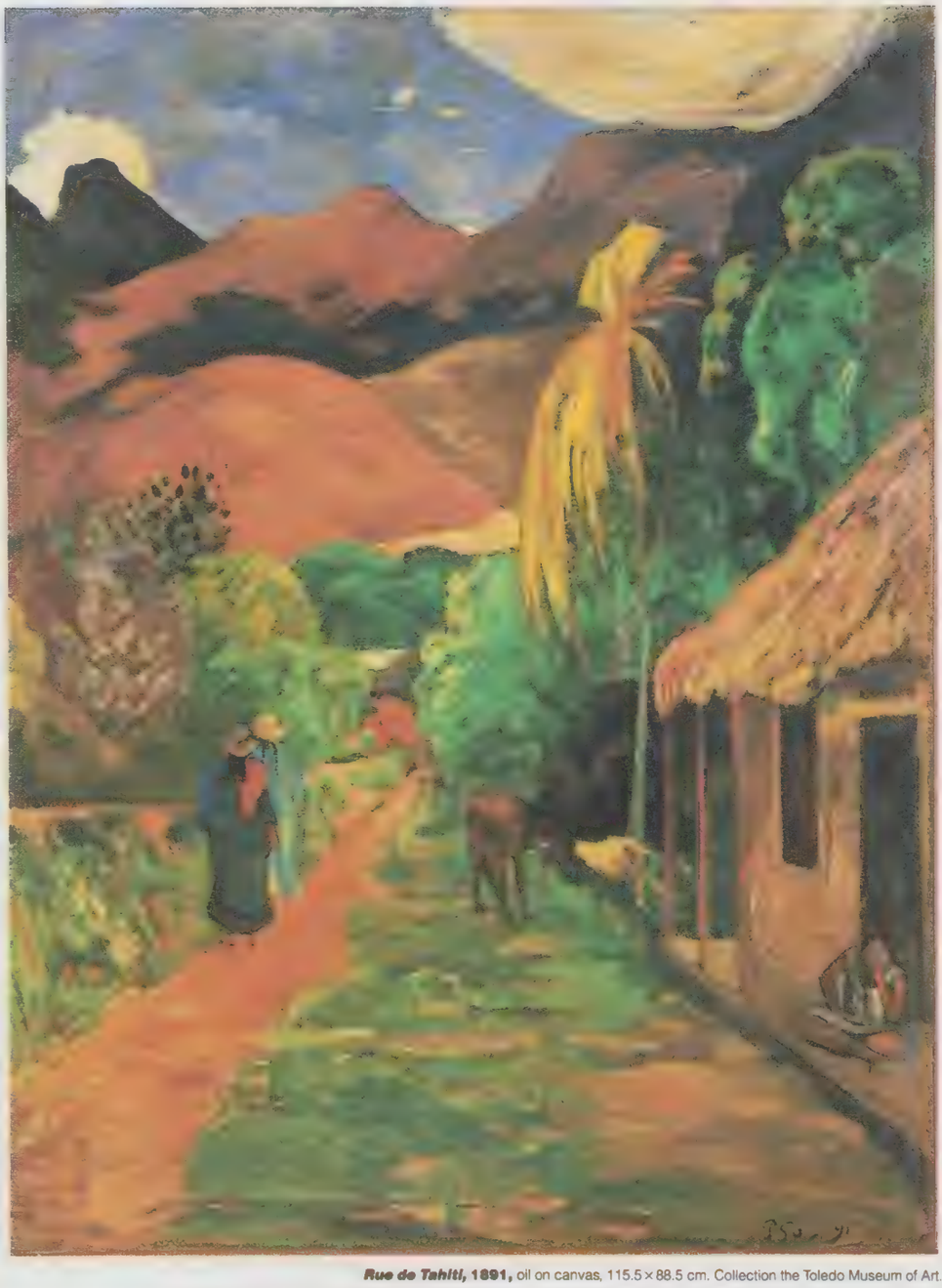
"It started during a visit to Paris, I think it was 1894 or '95. A long-time friend of London, Gerald Kelly, a superb painter, who was later knighted and became president of Britain's Royal Academy, arranged for me to meet Camille Pissarro at Hotel Drouot, where an art exhibition was being held. I might mention that Sir Gerald Kelly was the real-life 'Griffiths' of my novel, *Of Human Bondage*, which he proof-read, as well as *The Moon and Sixpence*, for accuracy in my art references.

"When I saw Pissarro's landscapes my senses were overwhelmed. The sweeping beauty and mysticism in his work held me spellbound, encompassed me, drew me in, and I experienced a deep spiritual awakening, as if walking actually through the scene, with all my senses sharpened. I've always believed that a work of art, a literary endeavor, must offer two essential factors, namely entertainment and emotion. It was obvious that Pissarro was an eager student of nature. He was, also, a defender of the underprivileged. But I noted that his studies were without inclusion of ugliness or harshness that can be found in most streets and countrysides. His paintings were of incredible beauty, with a subtle blurring of sobering realities.

"I was in no financial position at this time to buy one of Pissarro's canvasses, but I made up my mind that I definitely would—someday." He smiled thinly. "And how I got my Pissarro, years later, is quite a bizarre tale.

"Pissarro was very old, heavily bearded, his hoary head canopied by a flopping beret, and he seemed withdrawn, almost in a dream-like state, as he stared at a painting, not one of his, tilted against a wall. His voice barely audible, as he murmured: 'A mad painter in Tahiti by the name of Eugène Henri Paul Gauguin, who claims I influenced his technique. But this *caractère* needs much discipline, and it is important that he controls the tempests which rage within him.'

"I was stunned by Gauguin's incredible boldness and the vigour of his equatorial island landscapes and the portraits of the islanders. He had painted the authentic character of the Polynesian native, of an arresting sensuality of a race that had lived for untold centuries close to the sea and earth, without having degenerated into reason. The spirit, the primordial power of his canvasses, could not be denied. With his passionate hues and forms, he had translated, in depth, the very soul of Polynesia. Pure entertainment and emotion—truly *great* art. Again, as with Pissarro, I knew I must someday have one of his works.



***Rue de Tahiti*, 1891,** oil on canvas, 115.5 × 88.5 cm. Collection the Toledo Museum of Art.
All works from "The Art of Paul Gauguin", a retrospective at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, May 1 - July 31, 1988.

"It was on this occasion that I knew I must go to Tahiti, before it was too late, and learn what I could of this 'legendary artist, who, from the depths of Polynesia, had sent forth his disconcerting and inimitable work... and who had entered so startlingly into the history of art,' and perhaps attempt a novel on his life."

Willie Maugham did not reach Tahiti until some years later, in early 1917, travelling by way of New York City, California and Hawaii. Aboard the passenger vessel, the *Sonoma*, departing Honolulu for Pago Pago, American Samoa, was a fugitive from the red-light district of Iwilei, escaping a vice clean-up, whom Maugham was to make famous around the world—*Miss Thompson*. The stage play royalties of *Rain* and the several movie versions earned him more than a million-and-a-half dollars. "I guess it's the first known case of a whore being the one to pay off handsomely," he remarked sardonically.

Maugham and his secretary-companion, Gerald Haxton, after a short stay in Pago Pago, Fiji, and New Zealand, arrived in Papeete, Tahiti, February 11, 1917. Lodgings were obtained at the Tiare Hotel, back of the town, whose prime attraction was the fat, rollicking Louvaina Chapman, of Tahitian, French, Scandinavian blend, who had befriended Gauguin on numerous occasions, a valuable source of information for the British author. In his novel, *The Moon and Sixpence*, in which he converted Paul Gauguin to a Britisher by the name of "Strickland," Louvaina became "Tiara Johnson," and her hostelry, "Hotel de la Fleur." It was Louvaina who introduced Willie to the chieftainess of a village on the south coast of Tahiti, from whom he learned of the Gauguin painting on the glass panes of a native's hut in the district of Mataiea.

"Gerald and I found the wooden frame dwelling, hidden in thick foliage on the southern coast of Tahiti. When I saw the painting, strangely executed on the upper glass panes of a door, I was spellbound. An original Gauguin! How it had escaped not being carried away by a collector, I couldn't understand. However, it was a good thing I came along when I did and bought it. There had been other doors in the front of the hut painted by Gauguin, but the children of the Anani family had scraped them mostly away with their fingernails. Had I left the remaining painting where it was, it also would have been quickly destroyed. I gave the native fellow two hundred francs (about $40 then), and he was very happy with the transaction.

"We carefully sawed off the lower section of the door

and transported the Gauguin-on-glass back to Papeete, and, eventually, on to London, then at long last to Villa Mauresque, wrapped heavily in blankets, hand-carrying it between us all the way, as if it were a fragile invalid—and not a pane even cracked."

Before he left Tahiti, with his research on Paul Gauguin completed, Maugham was to meet Pau'ura a Tai, the model for Gauguin's study on glass. "It was an emotional and disillusioning encounter," he told me sadly. "I had read Gauguin's *Noa-Noa*, in which he had eulogized her under the name 'Tahura'. In a village on the west coast of Tahiti, I found a prematurely aged Tahitian woman, perhaps in her late thirties, dressed in a tattered, faded sack- dress, and most of her teeth were missing. She spoke French badly. She was bitter that Gauguin had left her no money, and had deserted her in 1901 with her son by him, Émile, and had gone off to Hiva Oa Island, in the Marquesas, about 800 miles to the north, which had become his grave, dying in the same year as his mentor, Camille Pissarro... 1903."

Just as Maugham and Haxton were about to drive back to Papeete, Émile Gauguin arrived. "I was pleased then that I had waited to meet him. He was tall, powerfully built, and about eighteen years old. Gauguin could never have denied that this Tahitian young man was not his son. He was in face and figure a young Gauguin, the same slightly protuberant eyes, high cheekbones, even the slightly beaked nose, and the suggestion of a mustache like his father's. He told me he was born April 9, 1899, and he had sailed earlier as a seaman on copra schooners into the Tuamotu Archipelago, adjacent to Tahiti, but was now fishing for a living."

Maugham never saw Pau'ura again. She died in 1943.

The plight of Gauguin's unrecognized Tahitian son Émile caused Willie considerable concern. He terminated his *The Moon and Sixpence* with the hope that Strickland's (Gauguin's) Tahitian son by Ata (Pau'ura) would sensibly return as a seaman, aboard the copra and pearling schooners plying their trade among the coral atolls, for a redemption of a healthful Polynesian birthright of being close to the sea. Otherwise, he was apprehensive that Émile would become a drunken native drifter in the bars and streets of Papeete—which was indeed to take place. Later, I was able to report to Maugham in a letter in 1960 that Émile was hawking crayon-drawings, signed *Gauguin* on the waterfront, had been in-and-out of jail numerous times, and now weighed over 300 pounds. But a miracle rescued Émile from an early grave. A French female journalist straightened him out, took him to Chicago, installing him in the home of art teachers in Maywood. There Émile painted his "primitive art" on huge canvasses, which sold from $700 to $1400. This was short-lived. The French Consul in Chicago, sensing Émile was being flagrantly exploited, sent him back to Tahiti where he resumed selling his childish scrawls to tourists at the airport. He died January 6, 1980, at the age of eighty-one, in the hut of his son Marcel in Tahiti's Punaauia district.

But, to retrogress, concentrating on my first meetings with Willie Maugham in the 1950s, I reminded him that he had an interesting story to tell me of his acquisition of a Pissarro canvas. "You got your Gauguin—now what about the Pissarro?"

He nodded. "Oh, yes, that is a droll story, indeed."

And he proceeded to tell me the details. Maugham had spent most of the World War II years in America, on the estate of Nelson Doubleday, the publisher for his U.S. editions, in Yemasee, South Carolina. He had

***Faaturuma or Melancolique or Reveur*, 1891,** oil on canvas, 94.6 × 68.6 cm. Collection the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

***Parau na te Varua ino*, 1892,** oil on canvas, 91.7 × 68.5 cm. Collection the National Gallery of Art

escaped from Villa Mauresque just hours ahead of the S.S. Nazi Elite squad who had rushed there to arrest him as a British spy, because of his past Intelligence work in World War I and on the assumption of espionage adroitly detailed in his *Ashenden* or *The British Agent* series of stories.

In June of 1945, Willie received a telegram from Darryl Zanuck, then head of 20th Century Fox, asking him to come to California to work on the script of *The Razor's Edge*, which Zanuck had earlier bought for a quarter of a million dollars. It seems that the director slated to direct this epic, George Cukor, insisted that the author prepare a proper adaptation. Maugham wired Zanuck that he would work on the film without compensation, as he wanted his novel to reach the screen as faithfully as possible. So Willie came to California, moved in with his long-time friend, Cukor, and started work on the script.

"I worked for two months on what was called 'a shooting-script,' then, sending it in to Mr. Zanuck, I gave him notice I was going back to the peace-and-quiet of South Carolina. The tycoon, in some agitation, called in George Cukor. When I hadn't enclosed a bill for my services with the script, Zanuck had become extremely disturbed. He shouted at George: 'You know I have a wire from this Maugham fellow that he'd work on the script for nothing?' George nodded: 'That's right, Darryl. My friend Willie doesn't expect anything for his labors.' Mr. Zanuck almost swallowed his cigar."

Never in his life had Zanuck had a writer, and a famous one with a number of literary successes, give his time free on any script. He fidgeted and scratched his chin. "Look here now, George, I want to do the right thing by this Maugham writer. How about my gifting him with a pair of solid gold cuff links, as a sort of token payment of appreciation?" Cukor told him: "Mr. Maugham has many pairs of sleeve links." Zanuck drew down his mouth. "Well, then, how about a solid cigarette case, suitably engraved, with a reference to *The Razor's Edge*?" The director told him that his friend had plenty of cigarette cases in all sorts of metal, including platinum. "Then how about a new car of good make, with his initials on the door?" growled Zanuck, becoming more uneasy and perplexed. "There must be *something* that'll be acceptable to him as a gift!"

George advised the movie tycoon that Maugham had a superior car, hidden in a garage, unknown to the Nazis, and that while in America, for safety, he only drove about in hired limousines.

Zanuck then became very suspicious and angry. He seemed obsessed with the thought that Maugham was going to demand a half-million dollars for his work on the scenario. "Dammit to hell!" he yelled. "What does this Maugham character want?"

Maugham told me: "George informed him, not at my suggestion now, mind you: 'Mr. Maugham is an art lover, and I can suggest that a worthwile painting would please him very much.' The next day, George informed me that Mr. Zanuck wanted to see me on urgent business. Well, the moment I came into his impressive office, he came bluntly to the point: 'Look here now, Mr. Maugham, I don't like the idea of *anyone* working for this studio for no pay!' He was wild-eyed, and his small moustache was bristling. 'Therefore, I want you to buy some sort of a painting you like, at our expense.' I reminded the movie mogul that *good* paintings by *good* painters were not bargain basement purchases, and that I would appreciate it if he'd stipulate precisely the amount I could spend for a painting. 'Anything up to $15,000!' he rapped out, watching my expression closely.

***Vahini no te Vi (Femme au mango)*, 1892,** oil on canvas, 72.7 × 44.5 cm. Collection the Baltimore Museum of Art

"Well, I was thrilled by that generous offer! I had never paid that much for any painting in my life. Yes, yes, I did find a delightful canvas, by Henri Matisse."

"Don't you mean Camille Pissarro?" I interrupted.

Maugham held up his hand. "You anticipate too much, too soon. As it so happened, a year or so later I was able to exchange the Matisse for a superb painting by Pissarro, a remarkable scene of the waterfront of Rouen in France."

Then Maugham chuckled. "I'm sure I derived more pleasure from my Pissarro painting than Mr. Zanuck did from my script on *The Razor's Edge*. You see, he didn't use a single line of my script in the final production. His favorite scenarist, Lamar Trotti, wrote the final shooting-script. And, incidentally, my friend George didn't direct this movie. Another director by the name of Edmund Goulding was hired. I understand my *Razor's Edge* was an outstanding box-office success."

In the early 1960s, Willie Maugham, to circumvent his estranged daughter Liza, Lady John Hope, from sharing in his estate, ordered an auction of about a third of his art collection at Sotheby's in London. The sale totalled more than a million-and-a-half dollars, including the Gauguin-on-glass, which sold to Philip Berman, a banker of Allentown, Pennsylvania, for $46,000.

Nevertheless, long before his death in 1965, a few weeks short of his 92nd birthday, Willie Maugham had fulfilled his vow to own both a Pissarro and a Gauguin.

Cameo
Photography — Nick Vaccaro
Styling — Reuke Clark
Hair + Makeup — Ilse Heitzner / Liz Barrett
Clothing — Gaultier
Model — Monica Foulkes / Wilhelmina
Cosmetics — Lancôme

Cosmetics = Clinique

Cosmeti — Cha

Cosmetics — Christian D.

FILL WORLD
EAST SECOND STREET NEW YORK, NY 10009 212/477•867

478 WEST BROADWAY NEW YORK CITY 212·475·3333

I HAD SEX

LET MY PEOPLE GO WHENEVER YOU'RE DONE WITH THEM

When I was seven years old, my grandmother died and went to Heaven. When I was eleven, my grandfather died and he, too, went to Heaven. I knew for certain where they were because my parents told me.

"Some day, Bunky," said my father, "if you keep your nose clean, you might join your grandparents." So I had that to look forward to.

The only prerequisite for getting into Heaven was leading a good life. This meant that besides the obvious people in Heaven, like John the Baptist, Joan of Arc, and Richard the Lionhearted, one could reasonably expect to find Will Rogers, Mrs. Roosevelt, Knute Rockne, Lou Gehrig, Florence Nightingale, Vasco da Gama, and Grandma and Grandpa.

One thing I was most curious about: What did they do all day long? Were there any grassy areas? Would anybody have a football? Would Joan or Vasco be any good at tether ball? Or would it all be that old geezer stuff, like card games, checkers, croquet, and worst of all, talking?

The saddest I ever felt for my grandpa was one beautiful summer morning. During breakfast my parents were talking about where we might go for vacation and have the most fun. The lake had swimming and horseback riding, but, as my father noted, no golf course. Just then grandpa piped up with, "The happiest moments of my life have been spent in a lawn chair reading any book by Zane Grey." Jeez, reading a book in a lawn chair. In Heaven would lawn chairs be on a first-come basis, as they are on Caribbean cruises? Would Gramps with his bad knee have to race Knute Rockne for the last one?

Also, what about protocol in Heaven? With emperors, grand viziers, kings, popes, presidents, sultans, and peons all collected together, would there be areas roped off? I mean, could you simply walk up and shake hands with the Virgin Mary? Could you ask Moses, would he mind if you looked at the sports section—if he had finished with it, of course? Would I remember more than "et introibo ad altare," or would everybody speak a sort of Esperanto? Just imagine butting into a discussion between Thomas Aquinas and Albert Einstein by interjecting, "On that matter let me say this, 'Semper fideles, tempus fugit, and obitur yer own dictum.'" Having said that and not waiting for a response, I turn, my nose in the air and walk quickly away while whistling "I'll Be Home For Christmas."

Nearing the grassy area, I break into a trot and yell in perfect Portuguese, "Hey, Vasco, babe. Hit me deep on a fly pattern. Come on momma." I sprint across the picnic ground as Vasco unloads a perfect spiral pass. I take off in high gear, zigzagging among the picnickers with minimal damage. No one is trampled, but I step in Mary Magdalene's cucumber salad and kick over a container of Mahatma Gandhi's

TRUTH AND INCONSEQUENCE

I

The life of the ghostwriter is lonely. It's an invisible job and an invisible life, sitting at a desk, writing for people who are as good as dead. But as I grow older, I realize I'm simply no more than a malcontent. It doesn't matter what I do or where I am, I always find myself bored and depressed and longing to be elsewhere. You see, I am the ghostwriter. And being the ghostwriter makes life even more lonely, because no one sees me and no one knows, really, what I do. Even I don't know what I do. I simply execute lines in the same way a hangman executes criminals. There's always a new supply.

The life of the ghostwriter is haunted and miserable and cold. Most of the time it's dark. The lights seem always to be turned down and no one is around to talk with. Sometimes there's a moment of pathos or fleeting goodwill, but then it's back to the nebulous chore of doing something not readily defined. New York is a good place to lead such a life.

Early this year I read my horoscope. It said that, by the end of the year, I would be caught in the politics of interpersonal dynamics and hard pressed to know what I was doing at all, and why. It said I would be torn between urban life and the desire "to walk barefoot along a country road." If only the decision were that easy, alas! But the country road is lonely, and the sounds are just as unintelligible coming from birds and wind as they are from the people in the street, or the people who stop by and wonder what I do. I can explain nothing to people or nature, for when it comes down to it, nothing and no one is interested in an undefinable life.

My most fervent wish is to be as invisible as I feel. At least that would make for a kind of mystique. Sometimes I walk along the streets and pretend I'm the Spirit of Christmas or the Angel of Death. Sometimes these fairy tales make life bearable for the moment. At least people will look at me as if they can really see me. They know, for a moment, that I have something up my sleeve.

But it's Christmas, and my Saturn revolution is completed. I thought I'd be

ICH VERGEWALTIGEN WITH ELVIS IN A UFO

R.L. HORTON

turnip yogurt. Finally, after a long run, the ball is there just beyond my outstretched fingers. I've got to dive for it. Flat out, parallel to the sky, I am able to control the ball on the tips of two fingers and haul the pass in—almost at the same time hitting the ground and sliding face first into a platter of gefilte fish that King Solomon and his party are about to enjoy.

The important thing is that I hung onto the ball. Gramps in his lawn chair would have approved. Before we used to go to my Little League games, he always said, "Don't catch the ball before you catch the ball." He was pretty smart. Maybe when I'm seventy, I'll want to sit in a lawn chair and look at magazines. Those other people in Heaven could learn a lot if they pay some attention to Gramps.

The only bad thing I ever heard about Heaven was that there was a lot of singing. Well, even at eleven years of age, I realized that no place is perfect.

NURSE IDA Moller gave up comfortable life to become angel of mercy.

BETTE NOIRE

happy and grown-up, I thought I'd see the season in a new way. Instead, I rail that the merchants have stolen Christmas, and that nobody mentions Christ anymore, and that those who do, refer him to the Church, and to the Cardinal in particular, and everyone therefore thinks that Christmas is best left to the merchants after all. Sometimes I want to fight for Christ, but then I think that I don't know who he was at all. It's not enough anymore to believe in myths because this is the Age of Reason and fairy tales are fine for only a moment of recognition, like meeting the eyes of a stranger in the street and realizing that this is a person and not just a thing taking up space.

All too often I tend to see reality just that way: as things that take up space and are void of identity and integrity. It would be nice, no, thrilling, to be awake as the Buddha, but most of the time I am just another narcoleptic, eager to take a nap. How can I meet the eyes of a stranger when my own are glazed over with sleep? But what can I do to awaken, beside stop being afraid? Fear is not the easiest thing to analyze, for it leads this way and that, on to other issues, from the particular to the general until all of life has been connected like dots. But the picture it renders is not so easy to discern. It probably is a picture of loneliness, and being so extravagant, and so grandiose, it bleeds off the page into the infinite. Someday I may realize that we're either all alone or all connected, that *this* is the fact and that it's not such a bad fact after all, once it is accepted and understood. But eternity is a strange place to be alone, and stranger still to be part of someone else. I wish I could simply be me, for eternity, a kind of unexpurgated and perfectly bound edition.

The life of the ghostwriter is the loneliest of all because its reason for being is to take things away from someone else. Its purpose is to perfect, and that's a silly and futile purpose, for everyone knows there is no such thing as perfection. Hence, the life of the ghostwriter is completely invalid, no matter how it is presented. I am here to measure excess and I don't want that kind of responsibility. A nice way to say it, is to say that I refine things; but if you refine sugar or flour, you simply take all the nutrients away.

The life of the ghostwriter is paper thin and robbed of ingredients. It's a spot in life where absence is presence and a little is a lot and less is more. The purpose is to become smaller and smaller, to determine how little is needed to still remain alive.

II

Almost everything I've heretofore written I forthwith declare invalid. People change, evolve, revolve, dissolve, absolve. I have not meant to mislead you. What once I wrote I believed in as Truth. Now I may have different truths. Several years have passed, you see.

I am twenty-eight years old now and have never been to Europe. I sing songs in German and French, watch Italian films. Like Carl Jung, I do not wish to go to Rome. I live in Venice, but not the one you hope I mean. Venice, after the deluge, is like Rome after the Fall. My mother calls Venice "The Elephant's Graveyard." No one she tells this to understands her.

Several Saturdays ago I played pool

UFO ALIENS'';ICHSA

THE BAUDELAIRE-BIRD CONNECTION

HOW THE CELTICS GOT THAT WAY

It has been recently reported in a number of scholarly literary journals that Bob Cousy was an original member of the French Symbolist Movement of 1866 and, in collaboration with Mallarmé, Verlaine, Baudelaire and Rimbaud, Cousy rounded out the starting five for the most famous of all professional basketball teams, the Paris Symbolistes, a team whose evolution, as we shall see, is truly astonishing; however, there has also been growing disagreement in a number of literary circles, specifically the French group known as the "Lacois" (Tr. Lakerians), that it wasn't Cousy at all who was the *fifth* man, but Elgin Baylor. Others, of course, like "Les Royalistes," a French splinter group from Cincinnati, deny Baylor was there at all and remit that it was none other than Oscar Robertson, *"le grand O,"* who dished off assists to Baudelaire and Rimbaud. But once again, most of those assertions have been without adequate substantiation. In fact, according to an article in a copy of *La Gazette du Sportif* (Paris, 1866), the original Symboliste team was composed of only three players: Verlaine, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud and there is absolutely no mention whatsoever of Cousy, Baylor, or Robertson, though there is a passing allusion to the fact that Bill Russell (a.k.a. Guillaume, *"le noir magnifique"*) was under some consideration. At any rate, starting three or five aside, the questions still remain: What made this team the finest in the history of basketball and what is its connection to the Boston Celtics? Perhaps a little basketball history is in order.

It has been assumed that basketball was invented by Dr. James Naismith in Springfield, Massachusetts during the autumn of 1891. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The history of the game actually began in Paris in the autumn of 1866, twenty-five years before its alleged invention. In the little known book titled *C'est Une Autre Paire de Manches* (1867), published in France when Naismith was but a five-year-old Canadian, Michel Peteur writes that it was actually Théophile Gautier who invented the game of basketball. As Peteur records, Gautier was in the process of writing his famous poem *"Chercher de la Fesse"* when his good friend and colleague, Gérard de Nerval, burst into Gautier's atelier. Immediately, Nerval began hounding Gautier, in typically Nervalian fashion, about what the poet was writing, to which Gautier responded, *"Rien."* Nerval, whose fragile psyche could never accept *"rien"* as an answer, kept harassing Gautier until the latter, frustrated, finally stood up and crumpled the manuscript even though Nerval tried desperately to secure the paper from Gautier's grasp. After a lot of bumping, hand-checking and fast-breaking up and down the atelier, the taller Gautier, stopped, jumped into the air and flung the crumpled page over Nerval's outstretched arms. The paper arched over the stiffened defense of the shorter poet, bounced off a nearby wall, spun around the rim of a broken urn, which rested precariously on top of a cluttered oak bookshelf, and dropped in. Suddenly, it occurred to Gautier at the instant the poem plopped into the urn just what kind of game he had created: a game that necessitated finesse, deft hand-eye coordination, and a bit of Gallic bravura. Peteur writes that at that moment Gautier turned to Nerval and exclaimed, *"Gerard, c'est encroyable! C'est un jeu d'adresse, de hasard."* Nerval is said to have merely shrugged his shoulders and left the atelier to walk his lobster, but Gautier knew a popular game when he saw one, and so, with Nerval as his assistant, he set out to select a team that would travel the French countryside playing this new game which he originally called *"boule de texte,"* subsequently renamed *"basket malaise"* by Baudelaire and finally called "basketball" by Naismith.

In order to recruit players, Gautier held tryouts on a sandlot in the Bois de Boulogne. He advertised the tryouts in all sorts of periodicals, both literary and non-literary. Periodicals such as *La Pedale*, *Le Vieux Schnoque*, the *Broteur*. Needless to say, the turnout was enormous. Poets from throughout the cities and provinces showed up each attempting to make the team. Members of the prose community were eager to see what kind of "new fangled" idea Gautier was about to launch, an idea to which the oversexed, but

Nash's mistress, Juliana Popjoy, cared for him until he died, then, unhinged by grief, went to live in a tree.

in a place called Snookhaven. Most people, I assume, do not even know what snook are, much less why they need a haven. But in a strange little redneck bar-and-grill, on the banks of alligator-ridden Myakka, the bartender told me about man-eating giant turtles. I won two out of three games of pool, losing the last because I'd drunk a glass of wine. I do not drink anymore. Booze did me in for my twenty-eighth birthday, and though I received twelve red roses and a pair of red shoes, I remember none of it. What I do recall is awakening in the middle of the night and seeing, through my delirium, a dozen red roses transformed, in the mirror behind them, into Dostoevski's head. In Snookhaven I was a pool-shark for a night. It was the best time I've had in recent memory.

I am often interrupted by phone calls. Esther calls and I'm destined for boredom. She is never succinct in her writing nor to-the-point in conversation. Esther talks for at least an hour, and would continue for hours more if I were not impelled to abort her monologue with any distraction that comes to mind: "Well, I must go to the store and fetch some distilled water."

Friedrich calls and talks rapidly. One senses at most times that there is more on his mind that he can translate into speech. Once in a while, if he awakens me from a nap, I'll tell him my true feelings about whatever his mind wants to talk about but which his speech cannot translate. When I'm awakened from a nap, I can read people's minds and tell them the truth before I stop myself.

Madeleine calls, usually to ask me something about astrology or her hair color. She thinks I'm an expert on these things. I'm an astrological dilettante and my hair is a mess. I have no idea why she calls me.

Julius used to call me five times a day when he thought he was in love with me. I grew uneasy. I do not like talking to people on the phone—even to people I like. I could never think of enough things to talk about to Julius, we have very little in common. Sometimes he'd fall asleep over the telephone, which I found insulting. But it was his phone call, after all. Julius calls rarely now, and when he does, it is always in the morning while I am washing my hair with blue shampoo. The shampoo remains on my hair too long, and my hair turns a queer blue tint impossible to describe.

Agnes still insists on calling me. Her calls are the ones I dread the most. I have known Agnes all my life and her story never changes—though I've grown a little stern with her recently and have forced her to be less oblique. If the story must remain the same, at least tell it to me differently. Agnes was an abused child, something I'm very sorry about. I've encouraged her for years to find a good therapist, though from experience I know that a "good" therapist is always a) a Jungian, and b) impossible to find except through intuition. The best way to find a good therapist is to turn to the yellow pages and use one's sixth sense or second sight. Eventually the best therapist in the book—not necessarily a truly "good" one, but adequate—will call out to you like the voice of Jung or John the Baptist. Agnes has never experienced a good therapist. She drinks ten beers a night. I told her, "Agnes, with ten beers a night you have about ten years to live. Why go on torturing yourself?" I told her to take some vitamin B or some cya-

DAS UNGEHEUER DAS

M.R. AXELROD

non-athletic, Balzac toothlessly replied when he heard about it, "*Tu parles d'une idee a la con*." Others were not so anal. Some, like Victor Hugo, claimed that it would become a "*classique comme Les Misérables*," but most were not as pantheistic as Hugo.

Originally, the game had only three players since Gautier felt there only needed to be one accented player (i.e. the tallest, called the "stresser") and two unaccented players (i.e. the short ones, called the "unstressers"), and that's how the tryouts were held: three on three. It was only after Rimbaud suggested that five was a better number than three, since pentagrams offered more flexibility than triangles, especially on defense, that Gautier changed his mind.[1]

Likewise, the ball was originally made out of tricolor papier-maché (hence the original name "*boule de text*"), but was soon changed to rubber after Baudelaire said that papier-maché rendered the game too one-dimensional. Suggesting the game needed some activity as well as color, Baudelaire contacted Balzac's tailor, Buisson, who was also a manufacturer of tennis balls, to produce the world's first rubber "*boule de texte*." Using Baudelaire's specifications, Buisson produced a tricolor basketball which was first used in the fall of 1866, but went unused in America until the inception of the now defunct American Basketball Association sometime in the 1960s. In addition, rather than use a peach basket (an idea Naismith lifted by reading a rather obscure Baudelaire poem titled "*C'est comme si on pissait dans un violin*"), Gautier actually had the House of Ghibelin weave a silk net which was then stretched around a wooden frame of Norwegian pine. This "contraption" was then strapped to a tree approximately two feet higher than Gautier's outstretched arm which, by all accounts, made the basket approximately eight-feet tall. When asked what the object of the game was, certainly the first in a history of ludicrous sportscasting questions, the usually collected Gautier was to have responded, "*Un bon coup*," which was translated in some English and American journals as "To put the ball in the hole." That object has, obviously, stood the test of time. As a matter of fact, it didn't matter how that happened as long as it happened. In other words, the rules as we know them today were hardly recognizable in 1866. For example, there were no rules about dribbling since one could dribble with one hand or two; also, one could either walk or run with the ball if so desired; and there were no rules about passing the ball though Gautier did stipulate, in some later versions of the game, that the ball had to be passed at least five times before a shot could be taken. This particular rule has become known today as the "Dean Smith Rule," though Smith obviously owes the method to Gautier.

Originally, the team that scored a basket received the ball out again, (a rule which still applies in certain provincial parts of California, such as Los Angeles)[2], but Nerval, always one for fair play, felt that after a basket there should be an "equanimity of purpose" which under Nerval's direction took the form of writing an alexandrine for the team scored upon; however, that paean be-

Charles Baudelaire. Photo: Bettman Archive.

nide. I give her a lot of advice. I have for many years. But when Agnes calls, and is already on her ninth beer, and we've been on the phone for hours, I always pretend that Esther has dropped by and that I am therefore obligated to socialize. For someone who likes truth as much as I do, I tell a lot of fibs.

TRUTH. It is something I am obsessed with. It is something I like to tell but not always something I like to hear. Ironically, truth is something I often do *not* tell but usually, unfortunately, I hear. Truth is such a funny thing that I don't even know if it exists anymore. It must have existed once, because once I believed in it. But the very ambiguity of my situation implies that I may no longer believe in truth and therefore it may no longer exist. Yet, there are things that are "true." Most birds fly, most people do not. There is snow at the North Pole. It is true that Reagan is the President now. It is true that many pairs of shoes are lying carelessly under my dressing table.

There are also things that are "not true." Birds are mammals. There are gorillas at the North Pole. Eisenhower is the President now. My shoes are lined up neatly in my closet.

Mostly, however, there is ambiguity. Cigarettes cause cancer. Jesus died for our sins. Billy, my cat, is depressed. God is beneficent. God is unconscious. All people are deviant. Grandmother is senile. Florida is a horrible place. Eating meat is a violation of life. Death is just like life but in another place.

You can see the kinds of things with which I am struggling. The most ambiguous of ambiguities is truth. Relative truth. Truth vs. illusion. Half-truth. No truth. All is true in a particular context. I do not know.

Diogenes is one of my favorite people. I would like to believe that he is one of my simultaneous selves, but I am not sure that it is true whether he ever existed, although he must have existed in some manner. I do not like the idea of living in a bathtub as Diogenes did. There is not enough room in a bathtub for my shoes, clothing, books and memories. I *do* like the idea of searching with a lantern in the public square for an honest man. But I have never found an honest man in a public square. There, I find children, old people, junkies, dogs on leashes, perverts, tourists and statues. A lot of people say children tell the truth, but when I was a child I lied like hell.

Somewhere along the way, you see, I realized it was far too hard to lie. Lying became an impossibility, I regret to say, and then I had always to tell the truth. But then, later on, I realized it was far too hard to tell the truth and to behold the suffering on the faces of people who really didn't want to know. That is when I began to fib. Nowadays, if I don't blurt out the truth like a madman, if I have time to think about my words, I usually tell a fib. But I do prefer to tell the whole truth, or if not the truth universal, then my version of it which is myth. Oh I *do* suffer on account of the truth! But somehow, somewhere it is far better to scream out the truth in anger than to lie, or even fib behind a mask. Lies accumulate like dirt in the gears of a grandfather's clock. Someday lies will shut you down, just make you *stop*. Lies hurt as much as the truth. Only one hurts now and the other hurts later twice as much.

ICH GEBOREN HABE

EDNA SLEEVES wanted to see the wretched crook fry for his crime.

came too time-consuming and what eventually resulted was what became known as *"vers libre"* or "free outs after a basket." This rule satisfied Nerval's "equanimity of purpose" and also quickened the game which was initially played until a time-keeper had finished reciting Cantos I-XV of Dante's *Inferno*. This idea too was substituted for clock time in 1890 at the request of *"boule de texte"* aficionado Marcel Proust.

After over two weeks of tryouts, Gautier finally selected his starting three and announced them at a press conference held in the Hôtel de Rambouillet. At stresser, Verlaine; at one unstresser, Rimbaud; and at the other unstresser, Baudelaire. When asked why he chose whom he did, Gautier waxed literary. Of Baudelaire, Gautier said, his movements were literary correspondences between sound and sense. He said that Baudelaire was the most polished of the players he had seen and said further that every move he made was a well-rehearsed nuance. "Baudelaire," Gautier said, "never telegraphs anything he does. And nothing is left to chance. He's got the greatest court sense of any poet I've seen. Almost mystical acuity. There's no player who can extract so much from a game yet vent so much spleen on everyone as well." Verlaine, Gautier said, was a master at the technique of measurement. A great leaper, Verlaine alters his movements by multiplying the number of ternary feet, varying his pauses on the court, and accumulating odd run-on motions that usually render defenses senseless. "Don't let that saturnine expression fool you," Gautier said with a grin, "Verlaine puts stresses on defenders where they least expect him." About the youthful Rimbaud, Gautier merely smiled and said he was the nervous system of the team. "Rebellion," he said. "Unconventional, imagistic. A player who abandons ordered reality for free play. Coaching him is like a season in hell. You're always one day from disaster. He's the kind of player who can make a game. He makes things happen out there. Like Isaiah Thomas. There's no rhyme or reason to his style of play. Sometimes the things he gives you shouldn't work, but they do. If you expect poetry he gives you prose, prose poetry, if you get my meaning." When asked why poets such as Corbière and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam weren't included, Gautier sighed and said there was, as yet, no room on the roster.

The Paris Symbolistes toured France during the 1866-67 season compiling an extraordinary 19-0 record. In the beginning of the 1867-68 season, Gautier, as recommended by Rimbaud, made it a five-man team by adding Corbière, who finally settled his contract dispute, and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, who eventually shortened his name to Villy in order to get it on his jersey. As Rimbaud had prophesied, using two more men did give the team more flexibility and strengthened an already intimidating man-to-man defense. More changes ensued: the positions were renamed "center," "forward" and "guard"; the basket was raised to nine feet; dribbling became mandatory and so did passing. During the '67-'68 season, the Symbolistes rolled up an impressive 24-1 record, their lone loss coming the day Baudelaire died. Other Europeans took notice and other countries began sporting "Symbolist" teams: Arthur Symons began one in

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PETER MAX

MIKE PAGNOTTA

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Peter Max. Photo: Cliff Lipson.

7:30 The first rays of morning light skip off the Hudson river and dance around my room. I've been meditating and doing yoga stretches for about an hour, a discipline I picked up as a young boy in Tibet. Once I'm completely relaxed, I walk into my painting room to inspect last night's work. I pick up a small canvas, as I have done for the last 20 years, and make a quick painting. I'm ready for the day.

9:00 After a light breakfast and a shower, I'm on my way to the 65th street studio where a crew has been getting my paints, canvas and paper prepared for the day's work. When I arrive, I'm greeted by my daily schedule and a phone message pad filled from the night before.

10:30 OK! "Get Ed Koch on the phone." "Get Jerry Weintraub on the phone." "Get Victor Potamkin on the phone." This is a busy day as usual. I take my water-colored papers out of my bag and begin drawing; during phone calls, during meetings, during lunch, always drawing.

Mayor Koch wants to know when his portrait will be ready for presentation. "It just needs a few more strokes," I tell him. "Maybe tomorrow." Behind me, on my wall of 18 monitors, MTV is playing upside down. I'm getting the inspiration for a couple of videos I've been asked to do. Still, I'm drawing.

12:00 No time for lunch. Just a quick bite off the easel where I'm finishing up some pieces from yesterday. Later, they will be photographed, documented and shipped to Hanson Galleries across the country. This is really exciting to me. I create a work of art and within 24 hours, it's on display. Unbelievable!!

1:30 . The New York Times just called for an interview, so has CNN and Newsweek. The more I'm working the more people are reacting to it. I got a surprise visit from my friend Ron Wood, of the Rolling Stones. He has been painting lately and I like to help him whenever I can. We talk about old times as he watches me work. I've made 20 new paintings and drawings today. There is acrylic and oil paint everywhere.

4:00 I get cleaned up for a meeting. Amazing!

6:30 Just a few of my staff are left, mixing my paints and stretching canvases. I return to my easel and make a few strokes, then a few more... fast, slow, curved. Pretty soon, one piece starts to happen, then another, then another. Before I know it, it's midnight. I flip off the monitors, cover my paints and look over the day's work. Is it too much...? Nah.

CHERYL KORALIK/PAUL NISKI DESIGN

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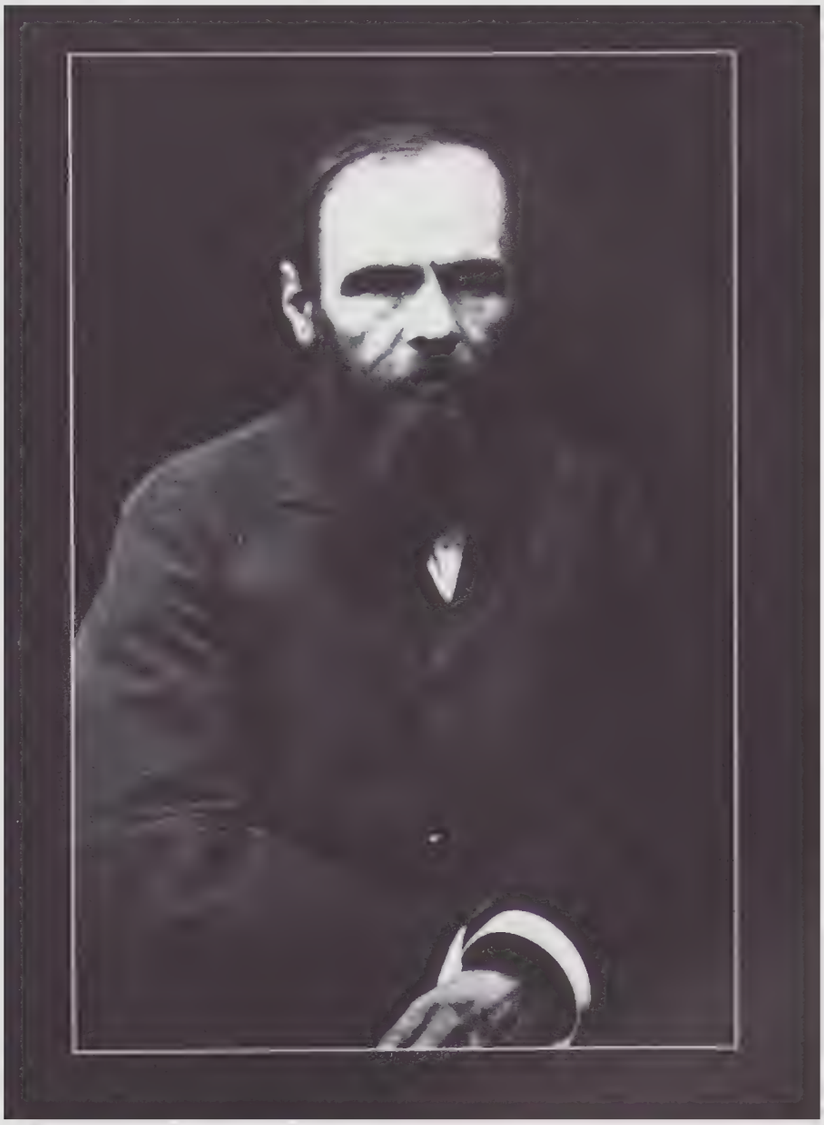

SPLASH

OPUS

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FRAU STIEHLT 1,922

England; Stefan George in Germany; Bryusov in Russia. The whole continent was trying to come up with a team that could challenge the "poetry" of the Symbolistes. But it wasn't until 1891 that the United States finally took an interest.

Naismith, as people may not know, was a French scholar and well-acquainted with the Symbolist Movement (as the teams' style was called) in France. In the autumn of 1891, Naismith had been in correspondence with Mallarmé, then 49, who had taken over the head coaching duties when Gautier died in 1872. According to Mallarmé's correspondence,[3] Naismith was friends with a certain Hymie "Five Fingers" Feigenbaum, a backcourt ace who had learned the game in Germany under Stefan George and imported it to the United States. Feigenbaum was the son of a wealthy garment manufacturer in New York, Moishe Feigenbaum who was looking for some tax shelters. Through Naismith, Feigenbaum, contacted Mallarmé about buying the Paris franchise and bringing the Symbolistes to America. Mallarmé, who by that time held controlling interest in the team, was sickly and knew that if the spirit of the game were to survive, America was probably the place. So, on March 31, 1892 Mallarmé sold the team to Feigenbaum for an undisclosed amount of money.

By the end of the 1892 season, the Symbolistes had amassed a staggering 625-25 record and it was widely held, from Oslo to Odessa, that no team offered the balance of raw material and poetic fluidity that the Symbolist team did, except, perhaps for the Belgians and their All-European point guard, Verhaeren. Though the names had changed from Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Verlaine to Kahn, Vielé-Griffin, Huysman, Merrill and Apollinaire (the latter eventually leaving the team for philosophical reasons) the temperament of the team and their style of play remained the same.

In the fall of 1882, the team, with only Stuart Merrill willing to relocate, moved to New York where Feigenbaum and his partner, a New York promoter named Jim Furey, changed the name from the Symbolistes to the Celtics. For the next 40 some years the Celtics played in a number of makeshift leagues until the National Basketball Association was formed in 1946. But even under new ownership and a change of soil, the Celtics resumed a style of play for which they were so well-known while Symbolistes: poetic fluidity. A style that has won over 2000 games for the Celtics since 1946.

The history of the Symbolistes is a fascinating one and even though their name has changed, and the poets as well, one can see that the poetry remains the same. Today, the moves of Baudelaire live on in Larry Bird; Verlaine's defense in Kevin McHale; Gautier's ingenuity in K.C. Jones. And sitting beneath one of the myriad green-and-white world championship banners, Baudelaire must smile in tones of pleated elegance at the parquet majesty of it all. And that's how the Celtics got to be that way.

[1]Rimbaud was the first person, as in so many other cases, to use the term *effrondément* in relation to defense; Rimbaud developed what is known today as the "collapsing man-to-man"defense, a defense perfected by Hoosier helmsman Bob Knight.

[2]*In Your Face, Froggy: The French Origins of Basketball*, Farrago Publishing, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1982

[3]*Full Court Press: The Unpublished Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé and James Naismith*, Paraph Press, New York, NY, 1978.

BIRD

L.D. BLACK

Now I'm going to tell you a story about a seagull.

When I was still a suburbanite, we lived in a rough neighborhood. I've never met such mean people as I did while living an upright, upper-middle class life. The boys and girls had no qualms—I suppose because they had no conscience—about harassing people or torturing animals or even feeding each other a lot of shit. If the boys weren't frying frogs on the hot blacktop, they were shooting the birds off my mother's bird feeder. If the birds were only wounded, the bad boys brought them back to my mother to fix. One day they brought her a goddamn seagull whom they had shot in the wing. Mother put the gull in a large cage with a baby-bathtub full of water and some smelts. She had wrapped the wing in gauze, trying to set it. The bird didn't die, the wing didn't heal. Day after day the bird would be standing there on its little green legs giving us a malign stare. Finally we found out its wing was gangrenous.

Mother took the bird into the cellar and let it loose. It was flapping and running around the floor, and it might have been real cute except that it smelled bad and we knew what was going to happen to it. Before Mother could catch it again, it flopped down into the sump pump. We peered down into the pit to see it floating around in little circles as if it were crazed. Brother fetched his frog net and hauled the gull up out of the pit. It opened its beak at us, and we knew then that it wanted to be left alone.

But no such luck. Instead, Mother hacked off its wing, bound it back up in gauze, and there amid blood and ooze, it recovered in its cage, against its wishes. We named it Bird because we really didn't understand it much past that. When it was hungry we threw it several frozen smelts and sometimes a slice of bologna. No one liked it; it despised us. It was a mutually unfortunate thing that it lived for nine months more. In the spring we set its cage out in the backyard, and it would complain at the other birds who were feeding at the feeders. Clearly, it was bitter. Seeing the other birds was not good for its soul. And early in June, when no one was home but me, I found it sort of tipped over on its side, its little green legs as stiff and askew as ever. It had passed on. And I, being more afraid of dead birds than live ones, had one of the bad boys who brought it, bury it. No one has missed it since, and it has well nigh reincarnated by now into something more attractive. Like a parrot.

PSYCHIC Bernice Kulp believes Elvis is not dead.

ILLUMINATUS!

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PAAR STÜMPFE— AUS

CARRION

Darling, do you recall that thing we found
(*A lovely summer day!*you said)
That noisome carcass where the path swung round
A sprawling pebble-covered bed.

Its legs raised like a whore's in lubric play,
It burned, oozing rank fetors there,
Shameless and nonchalant, it offered day
Its belly. Poisons filled the air.

The sun beat down on this putrescent mold
As if to fry it to a turn,
To give great Nature back one hundredfold
All she had gathered in her urn.

The skies watched that proud carcass, lax or taut,
Bloom like a flowery mass.
So pungent was the stench, my love, you thought
To swoon away upon the grass.

Horseflies buzzed loud over this putrid belly,
Whence sallied column and battalion
Of sable maggots, flowing like a mucose jelly,
Over this live tatterdemalion.

Waves seemed to rise and fall over this mass,
Spurting with crepitation,
As though this corpse, filled with breaths of gas,
Lived by multiplication.

This world uttered a curious melody,
Like waters, wind, or grains of wheat
That winnowers keep stirring rhythmically
In the broad baskets at their feet.

The forms, fading into a dream, grew fainter;
Here was a sketch of misty tone
On a forgotten canvas which the painter
Completes from memory alone.

Hiding behind the rocks, an anxious bitch
Stood, watching us with angry eye,
Poised to regain the olid morsel which,
Hearing us come, she had laid by.

—Yet shall you be like this ordurous blight,
You, too, shall rot in just such fashion,
Star of my eyes, sun of my soul's delight,
Aye, you, my angel and my passion.

Such you, O queen of graces, in the hours,
When the last sacrament is said,
That bear you under rich sods and lush flowers
To molder with the moldering dead.

Then, O my beauty! Tell such worms as will
Kiss you in ultimate coition
That I have kept the form and essence of
My love in its decomposition.

—Charles Baudelaire

SHORT PEOPLE IN ART

LARRY HELLER

Hanse Brougham's vulverable little eyes scanned the Van Gogh paintings in the gallery as best he could from his raised position on the wooden crate he stood on. The crate raised him a foot and a half one way. He got off it and turned it lengthwise, and got on it, and balanced. It was a precarious business that got him some attention from one of the guards.

The lady guide was saying wonderful things about *The Potato Eaters*: and if he bounced on the box a little, on the upward journey, Brougham managed to see the painting some, around necks and heads. Just as his feet touched the box again, Brougham felt the guard's big hand around his arm. "You can't stand on a box in here, Bub!" the guard said in a loud, gravelly whisper. He put Brougham under one arm, picked up the crate, and carried them to a foyer, dropping them on the marble floor. The guard went away.

Brougham picked up his box and marched back into the gallery, to the very spot he'd just vacated: a lady stood there; he stepped on her foot and she moved. He was in business again. The lady guide was discussing Van Gogh's early work, the Dutch period, and the dark, greenish-browns, and the heavily painted studies of peasants and miners. She was showing how *The Potato Eaters* illustrated Van Gogh's attitude at this period, and Brougham was jumping up and down again, when he again felt the circulation-stopping grip on his arm. He felt himself placed horizontally, and he watched the floor, until he came to the place in the foyer where he'd been before. He was dropped from a greater height. Looking up, Brougham saw the irritation on the guard's red, sweaty face. The guard's angry eyes were wide, and fixed directly on him, as on a rodent. The guard's huge fists were clenched, upraised, and he breathed heavily. "You ain't going back again, are you, Twerp?"

You bet your sweet ass I'm going back Shitbrain, Brougham thought, looking up at the mile-high torso and physiognomy of the guard. You bet you're sweet grandmother, I am. And when the guard walked off, to give a man and woman directions, Brougham grabbed his crate and crawled back in, dodging two-hundred shoes.

The lady tour guide had progressed to *Père Tanguy* and was discussing Van Gogh's more colorful palette. Brougham refrained from bouncing because there was a little space to see now. But when the lady began to describe the heavy impast and rhythmic linear style, and held up some of the sunflower paintings, the space closed, and Brougham, now seeing only backs of suits and dresses again, began jumping up and down again, without thinking. In what seemed like seconds, the hand seized him, shook him roughly, yanked him up, and threw him down in the foyer.

"Next time I'll break your arm," the guard said as he stood on Brougham's leg. When he went away, Brougham did not think he could stand, but tried, and did. Grabbing the crate he fought his way back into the gallery, around the lower extremity of asses, and lower body smells, back to the place he'd occupied several times before. A teenager stood there, chewing gum: Brougham hit him in the mouth and the teenager went away.

Brougham stood on his box again. The lady tour guide was telling about the swirling, climactic *Starry Night*, and the ominously distressed *Wheatfield with Crows*, and a fat lady was blocking his vision. Brougham doubled up both fists, and began pummeling the fat lady, until she went away, and returned with her fat husband, who pummeled him. Now Brougham had to jump up and down again to see all of Van Gogh's beautiful paintings, and to hear what the lady tour guide was saying. And Brougham knew he was striking a blow for all short people, born and unborn, and he kept jumping up and down. And pretty soon, other short people in the gallery began jumping up and down—people not quite as short as he was, but short by normal standards. Pretty soon, even some of the people who were five feet tall, were jumping up and down. And then some of the taller people were jumping up and down, so that the gallery trembled. Brougham could see some guards, on the periphery of the gallery, pointing to him. They were red-faced, and their eyes were wild. Brougham knew that eventually he'd die for his extravagance. But that was probably an hour away.

ODE

THOMAS BELLER

In a fit of desperation, I put on my galoshes and walked over to the 7-11 for some food. After walking up and down the aisles a few times I finally gave in and bought the new improved Lucky Charms with swirly colored whale marshmallows instead of stars and moons. Back at home, I had poured the milk into the bowl and had the sports pages laid out in front of me when Owen walked in. I didn't mine seeing Owen because Owen was a good friend and he would understand that I really needed a break from the world and had to submerge myself in a bowl of Lucky Charms and the paper.

Owen wasn't very sensitive to my needs at that moment because the first thing he did was ask me how I was doing. I wouldn't have minded except that it was clear he didn't care how I was doing and just wanted me to ask him how he was doing. I told him I was pretty excited about the box of Lucky Charms I had just bought and asked him how he was. He said bad.

"Oh," I said, and stared down into the fine print with as much intent as my face could muster.

"Do you know why?" Owen asked, and I must admit this was clever because he didn't ask if I wanted to know, he just asked if I knew. Of course I said no. Of course he told me.

"It has to do with my body," Owen said.

Edna Scutter lived in the suburbs of Greenville with her baby Joy, her son Mitch, and her invalid father, Bob. Her husband, Herbert, was deceased: last April, at a neighborhood garden party, he was set afire by Edna's disarranged sister Alice, who doused him in charcoal lighter and flung hot coals at him until, consumed by flame, he reeled into the street, arms aflail, and was shot by a hunter.

KEINEM GRUND!

Portrait of Henry James by Anna Lea Merritt, c. 1880.

Contributors

M.R. AXELROD, a film/fiction writer living in St. Paul, recently completed his tenth novel, *Capital Castles*.

MICHAEL CANNIZZARO is masquerading as a newspaperman for the *Washington Post* and as a freelance writer in the city of words.

BART EVERLY is a freelance photographer and filmmaker in New York.

MICHELE HERMAN is a New York-based writer whose pieces appear regularly in *Metropolis* and *AdWeek*.

R.L. HORTON, regular contributor to SPLASH, lives, works and writes in California where he also leases cottages.

WILMON MENARD is a biographer of Somerset Maugham, whose book, *The Two Worlds of Somerset Maugham*, was published in 1965. His full-length stage play, *Somerset Maugham: Center Stage*, has just been completed and is in negotiation with Paul Scoffield. Mr. Menard lives in La Jolla, California, where he is presently working on a comedy novel, based in the South Pacific, called *The Willie Potters Paradise Hotel*.

CECELIA SMITH is an artist who writes about art.

MARGARET SUNDELL is still a go-go dancer who writes about art.

KEN WEINSTEIN, a free-lance writer, is alive and well and living in New York.

FIVE INTERIORS

LARRY LEFKOVITZ

The Van Blimpsons is done in early Mogul. Its *pièce de résistance* is the mounted head of a rogue elephant (complete to roguish glint in its eye) upon one of whose tusks is precariously balanced a martini. It is *de rigueur* to drain it, and I do not disappoint. Very dry, I am able to report. I return the opal, which has chicly taken the place of the traditional olive. I am pleased to note that the elephant's eye does not wink, a vulgar device that would have ruined the overall effect. Neatly taking the place of the settee is a large hemp hammock which sways appealingly to an apparent but discreet draft. A sepoy stands alongside, looking a trifle mutinous but otherwise unobtrusive. I murmur a few words in Hindi, but of course he does not respond, merely nodding politely at my *bon mot*. A perpetually flamed 12th century tea-urn, filled to brimming with Earl Grey Deluxe, awaits the guest. I decline to sip it. The sepoy is unmoved.

The Kropotkins is characterized by a proletarian èlan instantly grasped by even the most casual of observers, the dominant decor being chiaroscuro and no furniture save two benches from a 1916 Moscow tram. The apartment is dominated by a frameless floor to ceiling photograph of Leon Trotsky in matching frameless glasses. In the center of the room is a statue—in whose base is chiseled the word *mir*—which, my hostess dialectically informs me, once graced the Moscow subway and was smuggled out of Russia piece by piece by a method which she is sorry she cannot yet vouchsafe. A samovar, constructed out of Petrograd steel, bubbles noisily in the corner, a not unpleasant sound. I pour myself a glass of tea, first sucking it in the Russian manner through a lump-sugar which hangs on a red thread from the ceiling for this purpose. The tea is *not* laced with vodka, I am pleased to discover. I then sign the guestbook (in Cyrillic) rejecting my first thought to include something appropriate by Bukharin. I note that the last person to sign was Emma Goldman.

The Meriweathers. My hostess in a cinnamon padded Chinese jacket, cerulean silk trousers, her feet bound in the ancient style, greets me by inserting a jasmine in my lapel and leading me into the living room. At which I feel a touch of *deja vu*, remembering whence: the Royal Pavilion at Brighton. The visitor is arrested by a huge emerald green papier-mâché dragon which in bas-relief climbs an incarnadine wall otherwise unadorned. An incensed brazier burns in the eastern wall a Chinese water-clock is ticking subduedly, run by a small but nonetheless effective water-fall which collects in lily-laden matching shoulder buckets. The total effect is strengthened by our partaking of Chinese white rice-balls eaten with sepia-tinted acupuncture needles.

The Assinghams. A very charming English decor greets the eye the moment one enters (as I did) the foyer (a French idea incorporated with the Norman conquest) with its fox-hunt motif emphasized by twined fox-tails forming a wainscot at eye-level. The foyer leads boldly into the sitting room done in Edwardian stripes of cream and gold which, my hostess informs me, are the favorite colors of Princess Diana and herself. A tasteful English restraint is at all times present, although I must admit not taking to heart at first a tea-colored woolly carpet that I am informed is composed not of wool, but tea-leaves fastidiously spread upon a matrix of jute. Which, I am further informed, my hostess rakes every morning. A pewter vase, raising intimations of a chamber-pot, claims pride of place on the mantelpiece and I am not entirely calmed by my hostess' assurance that it was a shaving-mug of George III.

The Byrons prefer a contemporary scene, at once immediate to the most casual visitor. The living room is taken up by a huge work-of-art (my host's word), geometric and at the same time of vaguely libidinous aspect which bears the subscription "Penultimate Object." My host assures me this is art-cum-furniture which he promptly proves by leaping into its prime orifice and curling up cat-like. To my question of whether he is sitting or reclining he merely smiles mysteriously. The work-of-art, he informs me is made up entirely of pre-stressed struts taken from four Barcelona chairs. I had to destroy a set but it was worth it, he imparts, confirming my suspicion that he is the creator, and with filial nonchalance giving the work a neat backhand; I am surprised by the pure tone of the response which, if I am not mistaken, is C-minor. I venture this opinion. He smiles affably, but neither confirms nor denies. Aside from the previously described, the room is empty save for a dazzlingly burnished mouse-trap-like object in one corner. Something left over from the Barcelona chairs? "Ultimate Object," I suggest. Ultimate mouse-trap, he replies, Cheshire-like.

Cynthia Rowley Cuts a New Ingenue. Photograph: Jonelle Weaver

SOUTH OF THE BORDER DOWN MANHATTAN WAY.

"...The stylish new Cinco de Mayo is worth noting as an ambitious and serious spot..."
Bryan Miller, New York Times – April 10, 1987

"...Mostly delicious exotica at reasonable tariffs...The house's burrito is a jalapeño tortilla lovingly browned, especially seductive, filled with black beans and that homemade sausage or good charred chicken..."
Gael Greene, New York Magazine – March 9, 1987

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continued from next page

the iniquity in their own souls and in the souls of others. But no Scorpio is decadent, per se. The evil of an evil Scorpio has nothing to do with art, but everything to do with nature.

Sagittarius, guided by Jupiter, produces a rollicking, jovial type of degenerate whose only real transgression is excess. Unless he's William Buckley, his vices are easily excused because he's not essentially a vicious being. Jupiterians have a need to entertain and be idolized in return. Their vanity is silly but they mean no harm. They are guileless, loud, obnoxious *farceurs*, impossible to despise. But Jupiter's natural inclination is to expansion. And in seeking to gorge themselves on all varieties of experience, Sagittarians do indeed turn dissolute. They love themselves, they love everybody, their morals are a sham. But they believe they're good, and so they are. Decadent Sagittarians die young, before the onset of sleaze. They become famous for elevating the seamy side of life, and they document the demi-monde like Toulouse-Lautrec at Montmartre. This profligate little gnome, who fraternized with Wilde, Beardsley, and Jane Avril, was nicknamed "Teapot" after the size and shape of his particular anatomy. All Sagittarians are awash in sensuality. Jim Morrison remained deviant and desirable long after he died—thus proving that decadence at its best is not annihilated by death.

One would think that Capricorns, with their lust for utility and power, would be the gentlemen of sleaze. The fact is that Capricorns embrace decadence only in privation. Or occasionally, in politics. They generally are loathe to soil their feet in the netherworld for they have no illusions about its romance. Edgar Allan Poe, it is true, spent a lot of time in hell. His work, lush and overripe, was greeted with glee by the Decadents in France who misread his misery into their own ennui. But decadence accompanies lassitude, not industry. Poe was too prolific to be too depraved. Likewise with Henry Miller, who spent some time in degradation before being reborn. Political sleaze, born of paranoia, is what corrupt Capricorns do best. Nixon forfeited his shining place in history through the incautious and criminal maneouvering that did him in. And Stalin, legend has it, murdered even his own mother during a purge. The scenario for Saturnine sleaze is global. They feel they can rot the world but keep their own souls pure.

The last of the Air signs is also the least easy to appraise. Aquarius, whose sole objective is to be perverse, shocks the world with its oddities and extremes, most of which are at least half-consciously contrived by the Aquarian himself. The Aquarian will generate the idea of a fascinating perversion, and then follow it as easily as if it were innate. But lo, how the Uranian will suffer with his conscience! Even if he's a low-life, he can't cease to think about his spirituality. Even when he's as decadent as Des Esseintes, he'll convert to Catholicism like J.K. Huysmans, or fight a noble war like Lord Byron. The Aquarian is well-versed in self-redemption because he sagely knows that if he doesn't save himself, no one else will bother. Intellectual deviancy is the Aquarian's favorite kind because few Aquarians are dumb; it also allows him to feel he is considerably less insidious than the physical type. Lewis Carroll, for example, may have been a disgusting pedophile, but his enthusiasm for little girls remained purely intangible. Federico Fellini, the indulgent director, is transfixed by the decadence he unearths everywhere—but only as it relates to his own spiritual *Zerissenheit*. Aquarians are solipsistic as much as they are altruistic. The thing that saves them from sleaze is that they really live in a world of one, and their decadence is wildly autoerotic.

Finally the Piscean crawls out from under a rock; but has he been flagellating himself for God or for pleasure? It is to be maintained that all Pisceans look like angels, but their dreams and desires will shock even the base pornographer. They must drink themselves into Nirvana, and drug themselves into the Land of Nod. They are satyrs, nymphs, and necrophiles. They are wanton, fiendish, and unrepentant. Then they are martyrs, messiahs, and hermits in the wilderness. The children of Neptune defy all reason, for they scorn reason and live well on faith. What drives one Piscean into Babylon, will drive another Piscean into the City of God; often, the same Piscean will know both places equally well. The Piscean's unworldliness is fatal; his need to be assumed into the One is the force that propels him to the orgy, the temple, or to death. Mysticism, of whatever sort, lures him away from his ego. Ecstasy is the only thing he lives for, and if creativity is a by-product, as often it is, this is purely incidental. The history of art, therefore, is full of transcendent Piscean madmen who have lost their souls to the cosmic soul where decadence finds its culmination in divinity.

THE ASTROLOGY OF SLEAZE

L.D. Black

What is commonly called sleaze has been overlooked by many who dabble in the sidereal arts. Astrologers dismiss sleaze as unpleasant because most astrologers are Romantics, and Romantics are reluctant to admit that decadence is dead. What once would have been called decadent is today neither more nor less than sleaze. Debauchees and diaboliques have lost their style, their indulgences are no longer savored but committed randomly without forethought. Decadence that has lost its art is sleaze, but the fact has not depopulated the demi-monde one bit. Hence, astrologers must look *below* if they are to understand what they see above.

Baudelaire and Swinburne were two decadent and fleshly poets, born under Mars, who admired each other across the English Channel and were largely responsible for the birth of Modern literature. They both used exquisitely assonant and alliterative language which could not conceal the fact that they were writing, respectively, about a noisome corpse or a sadomasochistic lesbian *pas de deux*. Baudelaire was syphilitic and addicted to drugs while he was still quite green. Swinburne simply liked to be whipped. Both poets came to a rather bad end. When Arians go to seed, which is actually quite rare, they do it with abandon. But Baudelaire and Swinburne, by virtue of their poetry, were redeemed from sleaze and ignominy. Their odes to loneliness and unsavory behavior exulted lurid desire above prurience. Pugilistic Aries people are better off fighting others than fighting themselves. The Aries who'd rather receive pain than inflict it is a deviate. Or a poet.

Taureans are indignant about decadence. Not many of them hang about courting thrills downtown or in opium dens; mostly they prefer to dine out and then go home. In the past, as today, the most decadent a Taurus will get is when he partakes too well, like Balzac, of food and wine and then develops *la goutte*. Rossetti, the plump and drowsy Pre-Raphaelite, fought decadence all his life. Taurus people have the unspoken will to depravity, because their urge for pleasure is unremitting. But they take their pleasure within the boundaries of convention, for impropriety is unpleasant indeed. Reacting to his own latent hedonism, Rossetti strove to be painfully pure. He painted Madonnas when he yearned for whores, he wrote about heaven while essentially describing an orgy. Yet, short of dozing away too many years on laudanum, Rossetti stayed pious and prudish (but fat). Arch-Taurus Sigmund Freud was likewise obliquely depraved. He studied sleaze and thereby sought to save himself from it.

The Air Signs, *en bloc*, are a naughty threesome. Usually they lead desperate lives, seduced by excess, rubbing elbows, as it were, with iniquity. Geminis have dirty minds and dirty mouths and sink to really dirty deeds on occasion. Though strongly mental, their intense cerebrations may go unnoticed whilst they dazzle and shock and debase themselves in kink. The marquis de Sade, one is told two hundred years later, was a bright and insightful student of human nature. His agile Gemini mind was a hothouse of abomination which his agile Gemini body carried out. The fact of his writings did not excerpt *him* from sleaze. Less defiled Geminis simply contemplate perversion, or allude to it discreetly in their work, like Thomas Mann, under the pretense of psychology. Geminis are whimsical sprites who are generally not dedicated enough to wallow in anything, including degradation. Like Errol Flynn and Marilyn Monroe, they exude a sexuality that is not entirely wholesome, but they are never apologists for their infamy. It is all just a matter of course to them. Decadent is what they are. Sleaze is what they often become.

Ruled by the Moon, Cancerians are driven by vile moods. Ripped apart by moralism on the one hand, and indulgence on the other, they want to be virtuous and drink absinthe too. Alcohol is the downfall of certain delicate Lunarian types, and it throws them into fits of depression while they naively believe it enflames their genius. Modigliani spent his brief life living the cafe mode in Paris, dissipated, drugged, debauched, and fashionably despondent. The beautiful empty eyes of his portraits reflect his own anesthetized brain. Hemingway drank absinthe in Paris too. The years after World War I found all Romantic Cancerians drinking absinthe in Parisian cafes. They were essential to the Lost Generation. Jean Jacques Rousseau was essential to the French Enlightenment, and was yet another brand of Cancerian. Unfortunately he was not enlightened on his own. He promulgated lofty tenets and was functional as a theorist. But the Moon made Rousseau phrenetic. He was compelled to confess his secret shames, and then became suspicious of everyone when he did so. Cancerians, like Rousseau and Henry VIII, subvert the entire social order to accomodate a personal quirk. Some Lunarians favor the world by being self-destructive, for if they have power over others, one man's aberration becomes another man's law.

The Lion sees himself in a certain context. He sits at the right hand of God. And when he sinks into perdition, he does so incidentally; for in his pursuit of light and love, he often grows Luciferic—like the angel fallen into Hell where he then becomes lord. Rarely will Leos submit to unseemly things. They don't like their bodies or thoughts perverted unless the perversion looks divine and sounds imperial. They don't like insalubriousness or pallor or getting on their knees—all of which accompany decadence at some time or another. Behold Mae West at eighty. Was a voluptuary robust or unseemly at that age? Why was Madame Du Barry guillotined? If she had slept with peasants as well as kings she might still be alive and lusty. A fallen Leo woman will have had more men than an East End whore and yet envision herself as untarnished as the gold on the Grail. A Leo man is more wanton on the podium where his loud Leo voice can be heard by the serfs. Mussolini's fascism and Castro's communism are examples of ideological sleaze. And Jerry Falwell, crusader against sleaze, is an example of sleaze by association. What one thinks about most is what one will become. Leos who learn nothing from sleaze are destined to repeat it.

Virgoans wear respectability to hide depravity, and depravity to hide respectability. They are never precisely what they seem. Fra Savanarola affected the guise of a pietist, but only a lecher would find profanity in a Botticelli painting. D.H. Lawrence paraded himself as a libertine, but one need not read too deeply in his novels to see he was warped and Oedipal; it seems that he thought too much about sex and indulged too little. Repression gives Virgoans a lewd and lascivious look. They're secretly far more twisted than the frankly decadent horoscopes, and it shows in their eyes. If they act upon their innermost temptations, they resort, like Aubrey Beardsley, to sex with their sisters.

Aestheticism has always been the last outpost on the frontiers of decadence. When one is most devoted to beauty, one is already becoming more devoted to the ugly. Librans can be unbearably aesthetic, and aesthetes, when they've gone too far, are caricatures of humanity. They exaggerate ornamentation on their persons, in their performances, and in their speech. They dress like Liberace, perform like Liszt, and rail like Friedrich Nietzsche. Before decadence, Librans look like pastel bonbons in a ribboned box. After decadence, they look as if preserved in aspic. Libra, it may be said, epitomizes decadence: Oscar Wilde and Truman Capote gossiping vilely over anisette. If Librans aren't born into moral turpitude, they cultivate it. They think the flavor of forbidden pleasure will forever be sweet. Alas, they are horrified indeed when they awaken one day, obese, ugly, and abject. Overindulgence makes even the most precious young Libra old with sleaze.

The Scorpios, whom most people have heard about, are non-representational of the genre. Scorpios who are successful in life have overcome their base natures. Others, who have not, are dead or imprisoned. A few, such as Charles Manson and Joseph Goebbels, defile history with their villainry. All the rest are laying low, waiting to be good or wicked, for there is no such thing as a lukewarm Scorpio. Unlike other mortals, the Arachnid was born without innocence. At birth, God gave Scorpios, by way of compensation, the triumph of the will, so that if their motivation is right, they can become pure and illustrious by the time they die. There are, therefore, Scorpion saints, like Dostoevski and St. Augustine, who have seen, experienced, and forgiven

continued

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